COMPLETE GUIDE TO RESEARCH IN **EAST YORKSHIRE**

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BURIAL RECORDS

BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 227 FEBRUARY 2025 £5.75

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

TOP TIPS FOR TIMELINES

How a different approach to your family tree research can reap amazing benefits

5 ways to trace **Irish emigrants** to America

How I solved the mystery of a Napoleonic War medal

NATURALISATION RECORDS Download free details of those who applied for UK citizenship

CRIME IN LONDON Why the justice system was different in the capital

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- I researched the history of my street
- How fish and chips became a British staple
- Create an easy timeline with Genelines

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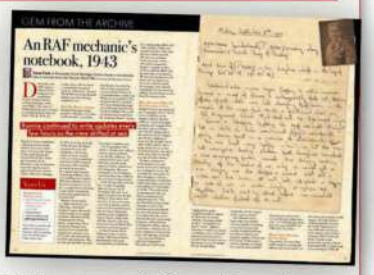
Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Don't neglect specialist archives that may hold unusual family records


GEM FROM THE ARCHIVE

An RAF mechanic's notebook, 1943

I loved reading about Ronnie Fisher (**page 66**) in this month's 'Gem from the Archive'. His account of surviving at sea during the Second World War had me gripped. It also reminded me that there are lots of specialist museums and archives out there that may hold gems about our family. To some extent you can search across archives via Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) for England and Wales and the new Scottish Archives portal (**yourscottisharchives.com**), but it's also worth talking to people with local knowledge and approaching relevant museums.

As family historians, we focus a lot on family trees, but there are other ways of looking at your research. This month I've been inspired to have a think about how timelines can give a fresh perspective. As Chloe O'Shea explains on **page 14**, a timeline approach can flag up missing records, suggest new avenues to explore and help you add context to the lives of your forebears. I find them particularly useful when writing up short biographies of ancestors to share with my family. We've also included a tutorial looking at software that creates timelines for you using your digital tree (**page 52**).

This month we've introduced a new series of occasional articles looking at five different resources to research an aspect of family history (on **page 19** we look at Irish migration and next month we will be exploring ways to research the women in your family tree). Do write in to suggest topics that you would like us to cover in future.

Finally, I loved finding out about the origins of fish and chips (**page 54**). For what many consider our national dish, it is a relatively new invention. I found myself recently reading *Cottage Economy* by William Cobbett. Published in 1821 he rails against the 'new' habit of eating potatoes instead of bread. I wonder what he would have thought of a warm portion of salty chips wrapped in paper? Enjoy!

Sarah

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Contributors

Chloe O'Shea
Author of *Discover your Dorset Ancestors* Chloe blogs about her ancestors via **thepastrevealed.co.uk**. Turn to **page 14** to see how she uses timelines in her research.

Paul Wilkins
Paul is a genealogist based in Birmingham who has taught family history for over 10 years in libraries, archives and colleges. On **page 19** he shares tips on Irish migration.

Daniel Gray
Daniel's book about Britain's obsession with fish and chips, *Food of the Cods*, was a finalist in the Food Book of the Year awards last year. On **page 54** he looks at the dish's origin story.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/ CHILDREN FROM CHEDWORTH SCHOOL, GLOUCESTER, 7 JUNE 1961, DRINKING MILK AND EATING APPLES AND CARROTS, FOLLOWING COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS TO REPLACE BREAK-TIME SWEETS WITH FRESH FRUIT AND VEG

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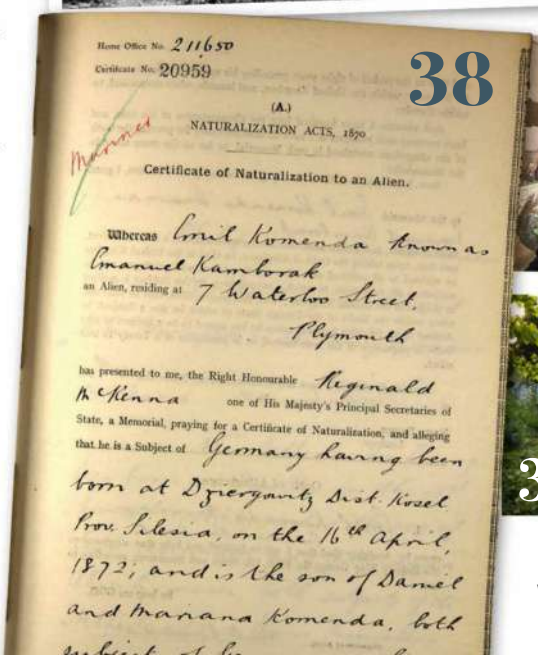

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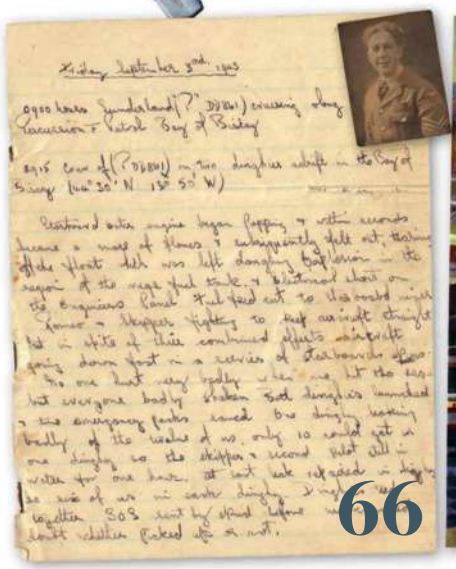

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STAR LETTER

Musher Susan Butcher gives her sled dogs a rest during a training run in Koyuk, Alaska

Mushers Not "Dog Sledders"

First, thanks for the great story about using DNA and finding such a spectacular story in one's family history (January issue, Reader Story). We all should be so lucky!

I am writing to suggest that Kim Thompson looks deeper into Susan Howlet Butcher, and for the writer Claire Vaughan to follow up on mushing's Colonel Norman Vaughan, both revered and important contributors to that world (where they are referred to as 'mushers' not 'dog sledders'). I lived an unforgettable 30 years in Alaska, and whether we were city or rural dwellers, their stories were always important and entertaining to all of us there.

Colonel Vaughan was a dear old soul, friendly to everyone he met. If I remember right, he remarried in his 90s and he participated in races even then. He mushed in Antarctica, as well; if my memory serves, he was part of Admiral Byrd's expeditions.

Susan mushed up Denali, North America's highest mountain. She raced – and won – against the men in a very male-oriented world, and fought for and won their respect, all while maintaining a friendly, kind demeanor.

In 1985 she was widely expected to be the first woman to win the 1,000-mile Iditarod dog-sled race in Alaska, but had to pull out after two of her beloved dogs were trampled by a moose on the trail. But she would go on to win the race four times. She's still talked about a generation after her death [from cancer in 2006, aged 51], which left her husband and mushing partner David Monson with two young girls.

So in conclusion, I want to thank you for such a pleasant morning's reading as this story has proved. It was a great way to start my 2025.

Marianne Lindley Girten, by email

Stories of Susan were always important to all of us there in Alaska

Editor Replies I'm sorry we used the wrong terminology there, Marianne, and thanks for the correction. I've enjoyed reading about Susan, and can see why Kim was so delighted to uncover a family connection.

GETTY IMAGES

Can We Have A Timeline Of Events?

I have been researching my family tree for about 40 years. In recent times it has been great to go back as far as the 1500s, with Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) etc., but I live in Australia and always come across records that do not display the original image, so I have to rely on the accuracy of the transcription, which of course can have mistakes.

I'm currently on a branch taking me back to the late 1500s, early 1600s. My thoughts are that having found gaps in years for the birth of children, I am wondering why there are gaps of some years between children, and part of the reason is that perhaps there are historical events taking place (such as wars, plagues, etc.) that prevent more births.

I think it would be helpful if one of your wonderful authors could write an article outlining the major historical events taking place in all of the UK, from 1500-1900. This would mean that a researcher can link ancestors at a particular time frame, where the man/father may be absent from home, and may only see his family every couple of years, such as in a war. Other events taking place could indicate how an event may affect our ancestors, whether it's a plague, major accident, weather, etc.

I could do my own research but that is time consuming, and though I'm not lazy it would be good to have a look-up table to what may have happened in a particular time, and then I can do my research if I need to. It is more about filling in an ancestor's story and creating a possible scenario of how an event may have affected the family.
Lorraine Taylor, by email

Editor Replies **I think this is a great idea Lorraine, although it would probably work best as an online article. I will have a think about it, in the meantime I hope you enjoy our article on timelines this month.**

Military Picture Analysis

The Corps of Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers (REME) Museum (**rememuseum.org.uk**) at Lyneham, Wiltshire, has a fantastic collection of documents in its archives, including tracer cards for many REME soldiers who served in the Second World War.

The cards contain a brief summary of soldier's service, so I, in my capacity as a REME Corps historian, was able to find 4918256 Staff Sergeant Arthur William Malbon's card and a card for 16001452 Staff Sergeant EA Lob, who both feature on p50 of your October edition [Military Picture Analysis, Q&A]. Unfortunately, I couldn't decipher the remaining names in the image, but it seems likely that all eight in the photograph were members of the same unit.

We know SSgts Malbon and Lob joined 3 Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) Servicing unit on 16 July and disembarked in north-west Europe on 11 August 1944. The National Archives (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**) hold the unit war diary for 3 AFV Inspectorate Servicing Unit for June to December 1945 in WO 171/2965.

If Diane contacts the REME Museum (FAO Historian) at enquiries@rememuseum.org.uk, we might be able to help her with her research.
Lieutenant Colonel Steve Colling (retired), by email

Editor Replies **Thank you for sharing this, Steve. It's important to remember that there are specialist museums and archives that may hold information about our families that are not available elsewhere. Also nice to know that there are staff and volunteers at places like the REME Museum who are willing to help.**

Military Picture Analysis

Why were these men photographed together?

Q This photograph includes my late father Arthur William Malbon (no. 4918256), back row with the goggles, when he was on loan to the Canadian Army. These men are all staff sergeants. Why might it have been taken?
Dianne Shenton

A This is a group photo of staff sergeants of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) that was probably taken to mark the end of their one-year course in late 1943 or early 1944.

The group isn't exclusively from Arthur's unit. A full list of officers and other ranks appears in the first War Diary for his unit, which is available at The National Archives (TNA, **nationalarchives.gov.uk**), reference WO 171/2965 (but not digitised), which shows five staff sergeants, only two of whom, Malbon and Lob, are in the photo. His service number is part of a group of numbers allocated to the South Staffordshire Regiment, so he must have transferred to REME when his technical skills were recognised.

WO 171/2965 covers 1944 from June (when the unit was formed) to year end, and WO 171/7003 the whole of 1945. They landed in France (via the D-Day beaches) in August 1944 and moved to Antwerp in September, then Eindhoven in late December, moving on into Germany in late April. The diaries rarely mention anything other than a few officers and the number of tanks serviced each day.

Since you are next of kin, you can obtain a copy of his service record for free via TNA – see the online research guide at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-brit-sold-after-1918**.
Phil Tomaselli

1 BUTTONS Nothing gives away a Second World War uniform more than a plastic button. They began replacing metal ones, as an economy measure, soon after the evacuation of Dunkirk, and by late 1941 were almost universally worn.

2 GOGGLES Malbon is the only staff sergeant in the photograph equipped with a set of goggles, which seems to confirm that he was a driver of some kind. Perhaps he tested the armoured vehicles after they'd been serviced by his unit.

3 COVERALLS The men are wearing dark-coloured coveralls with flaps covering their buttons. These can be done up to the throat to protect the uniform underneath from oil and other substances, suggesting that they work with transport or machinery.

4 INSIGNIA Normal rank insignia (for a REME staff sergeant artificer, a hammer and tongs above sergeant's stripes) would be worn on their battledress so, to indicate rank, these men have what appear to be detachable labels on their coveralls.

50

REME Corps historian Lieutenant Colonel Steve Colling was able to identify two of the servicemen who appeared in the above image in last issue's Q&A section

Sandy Angove responded to an article on our website about the 17th-century 'hearth tax' (tinyurl.com/wdytya-hearth): I found an ancestor with three hearths but he was exempt by reason of poverty!

Flexible Searching

I just wanted to share my experience regarding the importance of deselecting 'exact match' when using family history databases.

Irish ancestry records pose many difficulties for researchers, not least due to the infamous fire which destroyed the Public Records Office in 1922. Reaching an impasse, I took a less-travelled path of searching a well-known source for particular pieces of information which I had already established in fact.

The 'O'Kief, Coshe Mang…' collection (**familysearch.org**) is a multi-volume compilation of birth, baptismal and marriage records for a number of parishes in North Cork and surrounding areas. I knew that it should include records of the births and marriages of the Teap family for which I had birth and marriage dates of my mother's generation and her parents' generation.

An online search had, however, yielded no records, so I consulted the collection in the Cork County Library (**corkcoco.ie**). There I found the records, and discovered that those transcribing had mistakenly understood Teap as Leap, both repeatedly and consistently throughout.

This discovery prompted me to widen my searches online to include Leap and other near matches. If one transcriber had mistaken the ornamental school-taught T for L, it was possible that others could have done so also. This opened up a number of new avenues for exploration and my impasse is no more.

So, if you've exhausted exact matches, untick that box and explore some more in 2025!
Diane Searls, by email

Editor Replies I'm all for unticking the 'exact match' box. I have 'French' family in my tree and they're frequently mistranscribed as 'Trench'.

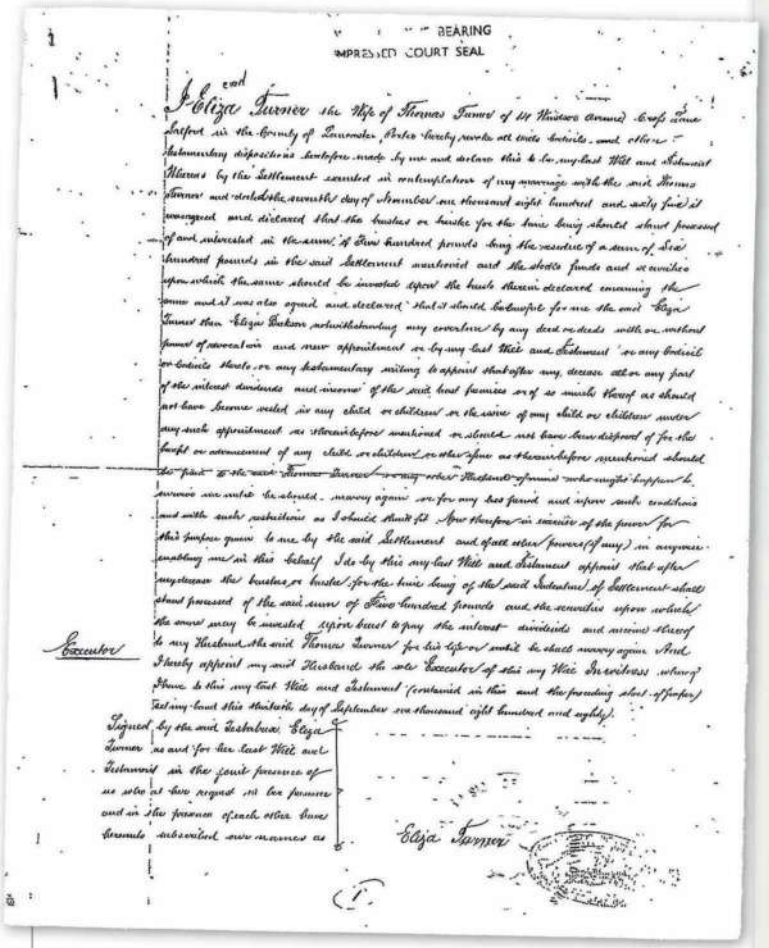
A Long Line Of First Daughters

I was interested to read the letter from Ged Parker in your September issue regarding long lines of first daughters, as I am at the end of one myself.

After my mother died suddenly, diving back into researching my family history was a way of keeping some kind of contact with her. Doing so I discovered that I am part of a run of first daughters that I can trace back to 1744 when Martha Pope was born in Marlesford, Suffolk. Apart from my great great grandmother Ellen who was born in Brightlingsea, Essex, when her parents moved there for work, all of us in the line are Suffolk born and bred.

As I don't have children the line ends with me, but I am very proud to be the end product of so many eldest daughters, knowing the pressures and expectations that can be placed upon this position in families and how all of these women have gone into making me who I am today.
Amanda Markwell, by email

Editor Replies That's amazing, Amanda. If any other readers come from similar lines, please do write in and tell us.


BEARING
IMPRESSED COURT SEAL

I Eliza Turner the Wife of Thomas Turner of 41 Hartcross Avenue Brighton in the County of Lancaster Retired Surgeon revoke all wills Codicils and other Testamentary dispositions heretofore made by me and declare this to be my last Will and Testament Whereas by the Settlement executed in contemplation of my marriage with the said Thomas Turner and dated the seventh day of November one thousand eight hundred and sixty five it was agreed and declared that the trustees or trustee for the time being should stand possessed of and interested in the sum of Five hundred pounds being the residue of a sum of Six hundred pounds in the said Settlement mentioned and the stocks funds and securities upon which the same should be invested upon the trusts therein declared concerning the same and it was also agreed and declared that it should be lawful for me the said Eliza Turner then Eliza Dickson notwithstanding my coverture by any deed or deeds with or without power of revocation and new appointment or by my last Will and Testament or any Codicil or Codicils thereto or any Testamentary writing to appoint that after my decease all or any part of the interest dividends and income of the said trust premises or so much thereof as should not have become vested in any child or children or the issue of any child or children under any such appointment as aforesaid mentioned or should not have been disposed of for the benefit or advancement of any child or children or other issue as aforesaid should be paid to the said Thomas Turner or any other Husband of mine who might happen to survive me until the age of twenty years or for any less period and upon such conditions and with such restrictions as I should think fit Now therefore in exercise of the power for this purpose given to me by the said Settlement and of all other power (if any) in anywise enabling me in this behalf I do by this my last Will and Testament appoint that after my decease the trustee or trustee for the time being of the said Indenture of Settlement shall stand possessed of the said sum of Five hundred pounds and the securities upon which the same may be invested upon trust to pay the interest dividends and income thereof to my Husband the said Thomas Turner for his life or until he shall marry again And I hereby appoint my said Husband the sole Executor of this my Will In witness whereof I have to this my last Will and Testament (contained in this and the preceding sheet of paper) set my hand this thirteenth day of September one thousand eight hundred and eighty.

Executor

Signed by the said Testatrix Eliza Turner as and for her last Will and Testament in the joint presence of us who at her request in her presence and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as

Eliza Turner

Sue's great great grandmother Eliza Turner made this will in 1880, proving that women could make a valid will before the 1882 Married Women's Property Act

Married Women Could Make Wills

I recall reading an answer on a past Q&A page which said that married women could not make a valid will before the 1882 Married Women's Property Act. This is not always the case.

My great great grandmother, Eliza Dickson, inherited money on the death of her father, Ralph Dickson of Preston in 1861. She married Thomas Turner in December 1865 and made a will in 1880, just before she died, and it was proved at Manchester in 1881 by her husband, the Probate Calendar stating 'Probate being granted under certain Limitations'. The Grant as stated on the copy of the will I have states that 'Administration was granted Limited to all such Personal Estate as the Deceased by virtue of a certain Indenture of Settlement bearing date the 7th day of November 1865 and of any other power her in anywise enabling had a right to appoint or dispose of and has in and by her Will appointed or disposed of accordingly but no further or otherwise'.
Sue Turner, Camberley, Surrey

Editor Replies Thank you for this Sue, it just goes to show that women could set up legal structures to protect their money on marriage, although I suspect this was pretty rare.

@DavidMatth47069 responded to an article on our website about marriage bonds (tinyurl.com/wdytya-marriage-bonds)
I found one for £1,000 in March 1799 (about £20,000 in today's money) at the Worcestershire Record Office

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

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What's On

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PICK OF THE MONTH

The Family History Show Online returns

The Family History Show Online

8 February
w **thefamilyhistoryshow.com/online**

Don't miss the online version of this popular show

The popular Family History Show returns with its online version, which family historians can take part in from anywhere in the world. It's the perfect chance to learn more about family history and connect with family history experts. There will be three talks on the day: 'Occupations: The Why, What, When, Where and How' by Mia Bennett, 'Wills for Family History' by Jackie Depelle, and 'DNA – What, When, How, Why' by Donna Rutherford. There will also be a virtual exhibition hall featuring stalls from family history societies and companies and local archives, and the chance to discuss your family history brick walls in free one-to-one consultations with expert genealogists. £7 in advance, £10 on the day.

IN PERSON

British Hospital For Mothers And Babies, Woolwich

3 February
a **Dartford Science and Technology College**
t 01322 527604
w **tinyurl.com/mothers-and-babies-woolwich**

Sue Sauter will talk about the history of this pre-NHS maternity home and midwifery school, which opened in 1905 and closed in 1984. Free to north-west Kent Family History Society members, non-members asked to make a small donation.

Eglantyne Jebb – British Social Reformer

13 February
a **Old Independent Church Hall, Haverhill**
e *haverhill@suffolkfhs.org.uk*
w **suffolkfhs.co.uk/index.php/group/haverhill-group**

Discover the story of the woman who founded Save the Children. £2 for Suffolk Family History Society members, £3 for visitors.

Your Future, Our Future: Serving The Family History Community Together

15 February
a **Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission, London**
e *admin@familyhistoryfederation.com*

The Family History Federation is keen to hear from family history societies and self-help groups about how things stand in the family history community, where we want to be in the future, and how to bridge the gap between them. If you have experiences or proposals you would like to share, or if you want help for your group from the Federation, please email the above address to register your interest in attending. Free.

Breaking Down Brick Walls In Your Family History Research

18 February
a **Nursteed Centre, Devizes**
t 01380 723191
w **wiltshirefhs.co.uk/devizes-branch**

Mark Bayley shows how you can resolve stumbling blocks in your family history research using new and unique search strategies. Free.

Treasures: Mapping Space, Time And Christendom

20 February
a **National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh**
e *nlsevents@nls.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/nls-treasures**

Discover how medieval mapmakers viewed the world in this talk using examples from the National Library of Scotland's collections. Free.

Resistance

Opens 22 February
a **Turner Contemporary, Margate**
t 01843 233000
w **turnercontemporary.org/whats-on/resistance/**

From the suffragettes to protests against the Iraq War, discover photographs of a century of British activism and resistance in this exhibition, curated by award-winning filmmaker and artist Steve McQueen. Free.

ONLINE AND IN PERSON

Manchester, Bolton and Lancashire Portraits: Key Figures From The Region's Past

5 February
a **Great Lever & Farnworth Golf Club**
w **mlfhs.uk/bolton/events/meetings**

Journalist and historian Brian Groom will discuss fascinating personalities from Manchester, Lancashire and Bolton. Free to Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society members, £5 for non-members.

ONLINE

Pharos Tutors

Various dates
w **pharostutors.com**

Upcoming online family history courses from Pharos Tutors include 'Demystifying DNA for Family Historians' (starts 3 February, lasts five weeks) and 'Progressing Your Irish Research Online' (starts 17 February, lasts five weeks). Various prices.

Using English and Welsh Court Records for Family History

Starts 4 February
w **tinyurl.com/sog-court-records**

Discover the different kinds of court records and how to use them to trace ancestors who had brushes with the law with this 10-week course from the Society of Genealogists. £199 for society members, £249 for non.

The Chevalier D'Eon In The English Law Courts

14 February
w **tinyurl.com/chevalier-deon**

In this talk for LGBT+ History Month, discover the remarkable story of the Chevalier d'Eon – an 18th-century French spy, soldier and diplomat who was born female but lived for years as a man – and what can be found out about them in the records of The National Archives. Pay what you can, £5 suggested.

BOOK AHEAD

RootsTech returns in 2025

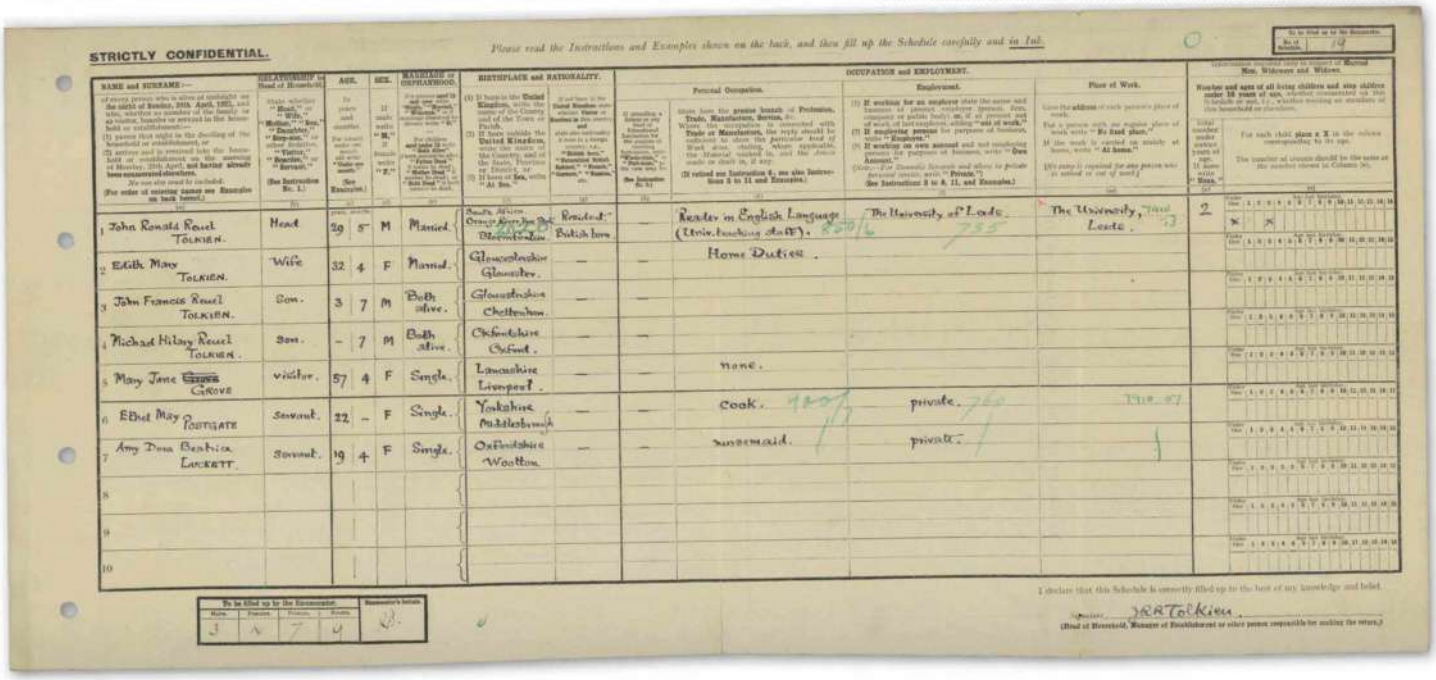
RootsTech

6-8 March
w **familysearch.org/en/rootstech/**

RootsTech, the world's largest family history show, will return in March 2025. The live event will take place in the USA, but family historians from anywhere in the world can take part for free, with hundreds of family history classes and keynote talks by speakers including Ndaba Mandela, grandson of Nelson Mandela. Free.

News

Rosemary Collins reports on the latest data releases and genealogy news


STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Please read the Instructions and Examples shown on the back, and then fill up the Schedule carefully and in Ink.

No.	Name and Surname	Relationship to Head of Household	Age		Sex	Marriage or Orphanhood	Birthplace and Nationality		Occupation and Employment			
1	John Ronald Reuel Tolkien.	Head	29	5	M	Married.	South Africa Orange River Colony Bloemfontein	British born	—	Reader in English Language (Univ. teaching staff).	The University of Leeds	The University, Leeds.
2	Edith Mary Tolkien.	Wife	32	4	F	Married.	Gloucestershire Gloucester.	—	—	Home Duties.		
3	John Francis Reuel Tolkien.	Son.	3	7	M	Both alive.	Gloucestershire Cheltenham.	—	—			
4	Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien.	Son.	–	7	M	Both alive.	Oxfordshire Oxford.	—	—			
5	Mary Jane Grove	visitor.	57	4	F	Single.	Lancashire Liverpool.	—	—	none.		
6	Ethel May Footitt	Servant.	22	–	F	Single.	Yorkshire Middlesbrough	—	—	cook.	private.	
7	Amy Dora Beatrice Luckett.	Servant.	19	4	F	Single.	Oxfordshire Wootton.	—	—	housemaid.	private.	
8												
9												
10												

Number and sex of all living children and step children under 16 years of age, whether enumerated on this Schedule or not, i.e., whether residing or elsewhere in this household or elsewhere.

Number under sixteen years of age.	Boys	Girls
2	×	×

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: J.R.R. Tolkien.

(Head of Household, Manager of Establishment or other person responsible for making the return.)

To be filled up by the Enumerator.

Males.	Females.	Females.	Males.	Enumerator's Initials.
3	4	7	4	R.

The 1921 census includes author J.R.R. Tolkien, who records that he lives with his wife Edith Mary Tolkien, their two children, two servants and one visitor

Ancestry adds 1921 census to its collection

Three years since it first went online exclusively via Findmypast (findmypast.co.uk), the 1921 census for England and Wales, containing records of 38 million people, has been published on Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk).

The records are included in Ancestry's 'All UK and Ireland' and 'All Records' subscription packages. They are also free to search in subscribing libraries and archives via Ancestry Library Edition.

Censuses are carried out every 10 years and record every person living in Britain. They are a crucial record for tracing the lives of our ancestors. The 1921 census was carried out on 19 June 1921. Originally scheduled to happen in April that year, it was postponed due to threats of a general strike.

The census gathered information on the population in an unprecedented amount of detail, including recording ages in years and months instead of just years and giving the name and address of each adult's employer as well as their profession. Even those who were unemployed (and there were many, highlighting the stark hardship of life after the First World War) had to record the details of previous employment.

The census also asked questions about whether children had both parents still alive, reflecting a concern that the war had created many fatherless children. And like the 1911 census records for England and Wales, the 1921 census records include the original household schedules, usually written by the head of the household.

One thing that makes the 1921 census records particularly precious is that they are the only census records for England and Wales that will be available for almost 30 years, as the 1931 records were destroyed in the Blitz and no census was taken in 1941 due to the Second World War. The 1931 census for Scotland was not destroyed and will be released in 2031.

Simon Pearce, Ancestry's family history expert, told *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*: "It's such an important collection. It's this snapshot into our ancestors' lives two and a half years or more after the end of the First World War. For me, and for your readers, it's so exciting to see our ancestors there. Their name on the page, the household, these amazing clues, their occupations, where they were born. These are the kinds of clues that not only help us to learn more about them, but they will then help us to trace them in other records."

Ancestry has licensed the transcription produced by Findmypast, rather than producing its own, which has disappointed those hoping for a new transcription of the census. However, subscribers to Ancestry have welcomed the new access to this fascinating record.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Original copies of post-1858 wills survive cull

Government rejects proposals to destroy wills

The government has announced it will not proceed with controversial proposals to digitise all copies of post-1858 wills in England and Wales and destroy the originals. The proposals, announced in December 2023, were widely condemned by historians and genealogists. In its report into the results of a consultation into the proposals, the Ministry of Justice said: "The Government… has… determined not to proceed with any reforms that involve the destruction of original wills."

The WFHS transcribed all 302 parish records

Wiltshire Family History Society completes parish registers transcription

Wiltshire Family History Society has completed a 37-year project to transcribe parish baptism and burial records for all 302 parishes in the county. The project began in 1987 and ended in December 2024 with the transcription of 19,487 records from Ramsbury, dating from 1538 to 1837. The Ramsbury volumes are dedicated to John Hurley, the society's vice president, who masterminded the project and died in July 2024. The records are available to purchase on **genfair.co.uk/supplier/wiltshire-family-history-society-116/**.

GETTY IMAGES

TheGenealogist adds City of London Cemetery records

Family history website TheGenealogist (thegenealogist.co.uk) has added 492,465 burial records from the City of London Cemetery, dating from 1856 to 1998.

The transcription-only records include details such as the deceased's residence, age, date of burial and parish and the location of their burial plot.

The digitised records of the cemetery are available for free on **col-burialregisters.uk/**, but they have not been transcribed or made searchable before.

Mark Bayley, head of online content at TheGenealogist, said: "These records represent a significant addition to our burial records. Researchers can now trace the final resting places of hundreds of thousands of Londoners, uncovering intricate details."

Joseph Merrick's burial record is now available on TheGenealogist

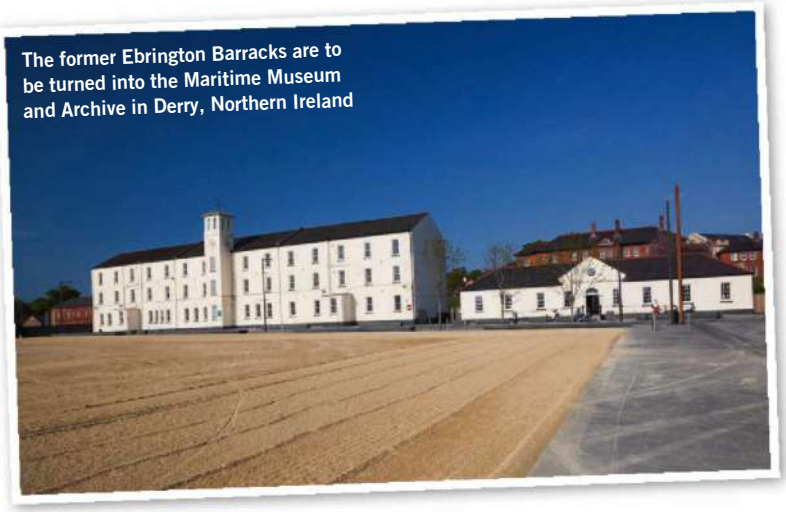
Among the records is the burial record of Joseph Merrick. Born on 5 August 1862 in Leicester, Merrick had unusual and extensive physical deformities. He was exhibited in 'freak shows' under the name 'the Elephant Man'. In later life he lived at London Hospital, where he died on 11 April 1890.

Merrick's skeleton is now held by Queen Mary University, but in 2019 writer Joanne Vigor-Mungovin discovered that his flesh was actually buried at the City of London Cemetery. Merrick's burial record gives his place of abode as London Hospital and his date of burial as 24 April 1890.

CAN YOU HELP?

Railway 200, a project to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the railway in Britain in 2025, is appealing to find Britain's longest-serving railway family. Railway 200 has already found father and son duo Mike and Andrew Lamport. Mike worked on the railways until he retired in 2008, and Andrew currently works as a guard for South Western Railway. Mike has a continuous line of ancestors who worked on the railways, dating back to his 2x great grandfather, Matthew Mathews, who began working as a porter for South Western Railway in April 1846. The youngest representative of the oldest continuous railway family in the UK will be invited to Railway 200 celebratory events. Current or retired rail staff claiming railway ancestry before April 1846 are invited to email *railway200@gbrtt.co.uk*.

Railwaymen Andrew Lamport and his father Mike



The former Ebrington Barracks are to be turned into the Maritime Museum and Archive in Derry, Northern Ireland

Planning permission granted for Derry Maritime Museum

Planning permission has been granted for a new Maritime Museum and Archive in Derry, Northern Ireland. The museum will be built at the site of the former Ebrington Barracks in Ebrington Square. The application was granted by the Department for Infrastructure of Northern Ireland. John O'Dowd, the Minister for Infrastructure, said: "This approval is an important scheme which will continue the physical, economic and social regeneration of Ebrington Square, a key development site within the city. It will also create a new tourist attraction that will tell the story of Derry's maritime history."

Scottish archives portal launches

A new online portal allowing researchers to search archive catalogues across Scotland has launched.

Your Scottish Archives (**yourscottisharchives.com**) is similar to The National Archives' Discovery search engine (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**), which covers archives in England and Wales.

It allows researchers to search the record listings of over 60 Scottish archives, including local authority, health, business and community archives, as well as records of under-represented groups. It also has information guides to help researchers get more out of different kinds of archives. Managed by the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA), in partnership with Jisc, Archives Hub and the National Records of Scotland and with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the SCA has said that phase two of the website would be launched in spring 2025 and will include improved hierarchical display of records and search functionality. Collections from more archives will also be added in the future.

Your Scottish Archives is now live

8,072,858
Teesside electoral register records, dating from 1832 to 1974, have been added to ancestry.co.uk

96
The age of a Southampton hotel visitors' book, signed by performers in the nearby Mayflower Theatre's first production in 1928, and now donated to the theatre's archive (tinyurl.com/bbc-mayflower-theatre).

Nelson
The admiral's famous last words may not have been 'Kiss me, Hardy', according to a newly discovered letter (tinyurl.com/msn-nelson-last-words)

209,198
Irish Catholic parish records, dating from 1740 to 1900, have been added to familysearch.org

45,000 years
The age of the oldest known Homo sapiens DNA in Europe, which has now been recovered by scientists (tinyurl.com/cnn-oldest-human-dna)

Parchment at the Venice State Archives

University of Warwick restores Venetian parchment

Researchers at the University of Warwick's Warwick Venice Centre have restored a unique historical parchment from 14th-century Venice.

The parchment was written in 1350 by a notary of the Venetian courts of justice. It recounts a court case by the nobleman Alberto de Calle, whose son-in-law Giovanni Loredan was one of six Venetian nobles who went on an expedition to Delhi in 1338. Alberto had invested almost 1,000 ducats in the enterprise, and now wanted his money back from his daughter, now a widow, after Giovanni died on his way to India.

Professor Luca Mola, director at the Warwick Venice Centre, who rediscovered the document, said it provided "the most detailed information on the operations of Venetian merchants in Asia soon after the death of Marco Polo".

Restoration work consisted of slowly stretching out the parchment to make it flat, cleaning away the dust, and mending cuts and holes.

The parchment was unveiled on 10 December 2024 at the Venice State Archives, whose director, professor Andrea Erboso, said: "Through taking Marco Polo as a starting point and restoring this particular parchment, we enlarge our point of view significantly."

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From Poland With Love

Alan Crosby recalls an extraordinary reunion with some long-lost relatives

A quarter of a century ago I got a phone call from my mother, who said: "Your Polish cousins have been in contact". Although we had scarcely any information when I started researching my family tree, I always knew that we had Polish relatives. My dad, who died when I was 23, had never known his father and had only a few scraps of information about his family, but he was told that his father's sister, my great aunt, had married a Pole, gone to live there, and had children.

In my early 20s, now obsessed with family history, I managed to track down Dolores, a first cousin of my father, in Stratford-upon-Avon. She was the daughter of the aforesaid great aunt, born years before the Polish gentleman came on the scene. I got to know her well, talking endlessly to her about her mother and her Polish half-brothers. Many of the yawning gaps in the story of my family were filled in – few dates or facts, but plenty of anecdotes and memories. In her seventies, badly crippled with arthritis and chain-smoking, she was fascinating company, with her stories about Russia before the Revolution and Paris in the 1920s. I began to realise that members of my family were witnesses to, and even involved with, great events in 20th-century European history.

Many of the yawning gaps in the story of my family were filled in

But Dolores had lost touch with her Polish half-brothers many years before, even before her mother died in the mid-1950s. The Iron Curtain had come down, communication with Communist war-ravaged Poland was extremely difficult, and she had no address. Where they were, and even whether they were still alive, was anybody's guess. I was amazed by what I had found out from Dolores, but doubted that I'd get any further. My intriguing Polish relatives would be forever unknown.

And then, in the late autumn of 1999, came that call from my mother. I could not believe my ears. By this time Dolores had died, but her elder son Richard – my second cousin – had phoned Mum. Completely out of the blue, he had just received a call from Poland, trying to renew contact after so many years, and asking about family history. They had found Richard via the Internet – he had a very rare surname and they searched the UK telephone directory online, before cold-calling him. He scarcely knew who they were, and family history didn't interest him. But, he said, we have a cousin called Alan who knows a tremendous amount about all our forebears on the Crosby side. He promised to pass on contact details, rang my mum, and I was given a name and address in Kraków.

I wrote to my second cousin, Wojciech Słomczyński. I heard nothing and so I wrote again (it later transpired that my first letter had never arrived). We went away for Christmas and New Year, and on returning home at the beginning of 2000 there was a note from the post office to say there was a parcel to collect. At the sorting office they handed it over – a large flat package with about a dozen brightly-coloured Polish stamps. I was so excited that I exclaimed aloud! I restrained myself from opening it until I was back at the house. Inside was a long and enchanting letter, photographs, biographical notes about my Polish relatives, and copies of documents. Later that year I went to Kraków, I met my cousins Wojtek and Daisy (Małgorzata, i.e. Margaret, is her formal name), and we discovered the most wonderful family bonding. Five minutes after meeting them we all felt as though we'd always known each other.

Since then I have been to Kraków over 20 times, we have talked endlessly about our family history (which is a series of quite extraordinary stories and experiences), and we have developed a deep mutual love and affection. Discovering them has been life-changing for me. Truly, family history is a wonderful thing!

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION **WWW.SUEGENT.COM**

SORT YOUR RESEARCH WITH TIMELINES

Chloe O'Shea explains how to use timelines in genealogy to organise and enhance your family history research

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Studying your family history can often be complex and overwhelming. With historical records, census data, personal stories, photographs, etc. it's easy to lose track of key events and relationships. This is where a timeline becomes an invaluable tool.

A well-constructed timeline will neatly collate your research, helping you organise dates, highlight any errors that have been made and any gaps that need filling, add historical context, and, hopefully, provide you with new insights into your ancestors' lives.

So, where do you start? Well, first of all consider the scope of your timeline. Are you creating a timeline for a single ancestor, an entire family, or a specific line of descent? You might even want to focus on particular events, such as a migration journey or military service.

For this feature, let's say you're focusing on one ancestor or a family, so next you'll want to compile all available records and documents relevant to your chosen ancestor, such as birth, marriage and death certificates, census records, military and immigration records, newspaper articles and photographs.

And don't worry if you don't have certain dates or names, this is part of the reason you're starting a timeline, in order to fill in those missing pieces. You'll often find that as you complete the timeline you'll discover a new source to help break down any brick walls. For example, a military record or obituary may provide parents' names.

A good timeline will provide you with new insights into your ancestors' lives

Timeline For Thomas WORTLEY (1820-1895)

DATE	WHERE	NOTES	SOURCE
10 Sep 1820	Methwold, Norfolk	Baptised at Methwold parish church	Methwold parish register
1 Jan 1825	Methwold, Norfolk	Death of sister Margaret aged 1	Methwold parish register
6 Jun 1841	Methwold, Norfolk	Residence at Methwold Hythe	1841 census
1849		Cholera outbreak in Norfolk	
29 Mar 1850	Methwold, Norfolk	Death of father	Methwold parish register
18 May 1850	Methwold, Norfolk	Death of mother	
1 Oct 1850	Thetford, Norfolk	Marriage to Elizabeth Baker	Civil registration
30 Mar 1851	Methwold, Norfolk	Resident at Rose Cottage, Methwold	1851 census
22 Aug 1851	Methwold, Norfolk	Daughter Elizabeth born	Civil registration
5 Oct 1853		Outbreak of Crimean War	
15 Oct 1854	Methwold, Norfolk	Daughter Alma born	Civil registration
8 Jun 1855	Methwold, Norfolk	Son Thomas born	Civil registration
17 Jul 1855	Methwold, Norfolk	Son Thomas dies	Civil registration
28 Jul 1860	Methwold, Norfolk	Son Thomas (2nd) born	Civil registration
7 Apr 1861	Methwold, Norfolk	Resident at Rose Cottage, Methwold	1861 census
22 Aug 1861	Methwold, Norfolk	Daughter Elizabeth marries John GREENACRE	Civil registration
9 Jun 1870		Novelist Charles Dickens dies	
2 Apr 1871	Methwold, Norfolk	Resident at Rose Cottage, Methwold	1871 census
14 Sep 1873	Methwold, Norfolk	Daughter Alma marries Thomas SMITH	Civil registration
3 Apr 1881	Norwich, Norfolk	Visitor at daughter Elizabeth and John's house in Norwich	1881 cesus
1883	Stoke Ferry	Railway line comes to the Norfolk fens	
1883	Norwich, Norfolk	Telephone exchange opens in Norwich	
5 Apr 1891	Methwold, Norfolk	Resident at Rose Cottage, Methwold	1891 census
16 Sep 1895	Methwold, Norfolk	Death from cardiac failure, buried at St George's Methwold	Civil registration

COLOUR CODE Family event | Local event | Historic event

Head online

Next you need to move your journey online, and a great place to start is with the 'LifeStory' tab on your ancestor's profile page on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). This is an automatically-generated text created from the events you can add to their 'Facts' page. Down the left-hand side you will see the chronological timeline of their life events and the age your ancestor was at the time. Other websites have similar functions, including Time Line on Family Search (**familysearch.org**) and Timeline on FindMyPast (**findmypast.co.uk**).

Just by looking at the LifeStory function you may immediately notice the gaps that need filling in, which is often the case with our more recent ancestors. Looking at my grandparents pages, for example, I know a lot more about them than is recorded. Without noting these facts down the information will be lost for future generations, so add in additional notes as you go, including any relevant sources.

Ancestry's LifeStory automatically adds in the dates of birth, and death, for close relations to your ancestor

LifeStory automatically adds in the dates of birth and death for close relations to your ancestor, namely their parents, siblings and children. Family events, meanwhile, are shown with a grey background. These are key moments that are likely to have impacted on our ancestor, but you may choose to add other dates, such as the deaths of their grandparents if they were close to them or perhaps the marriage dates of their children. Any dates relating to step-children, step-parents, nieces, nephews and parents-in-law may also be included. Or, if the person was not close to their siblings you may wish to take their dates off the timeline. The choice is yours.

Start, middle and end

A timeline will start from our ancestor's date of birth or estimated year of birth. Some people may wish to add some background information here,

Get more from Ancestry's LifeStory

Chloe O'Shea explains how to use the LifeStory option on Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk), which allows you to connect facts from your ancestor's life and build it into a printable story

1 Life summary

From your ancestor's facts page, click onto the 'LifeStory' tab. This will then show an automated short summary of their life at the top which you can customise.

2 Map of key places

Below this is a small family tree showing the person's parents and the descendant through which they are linked to you, followed by a map of their key places.

3 Chronological order

The person's timeline is then displayed in chronological order using the details and images you've inputted into their facts screen as well as their family's information.

4 Family events

Click the 'Show' tab to select whether you wish to display 'Family Events', such as births and deaths of children, parents and siblings, and 'Historical Insights'.

5 Add a life event

Clicking the 'Add' tab allows you to add a life event. This will also appear on your ancestor's main profile and is not just limited to their timeline.

6 Print your LifeStory

By clicking 'Tools' and then 'Print' you can choose to print the LifeStory. A screen will then appear allowing you to make changes to its appearance first.

GETTY

such as how long their parents had been married, when they were born and how many siblings had been born before them. Their parents' occupations could also be included.

And remember that a person's timeline does not end with their death; we can also add the details of their burial, any published obituaries and probate, where relevant. You may also choose to add the death details of any spouses who outlived them.

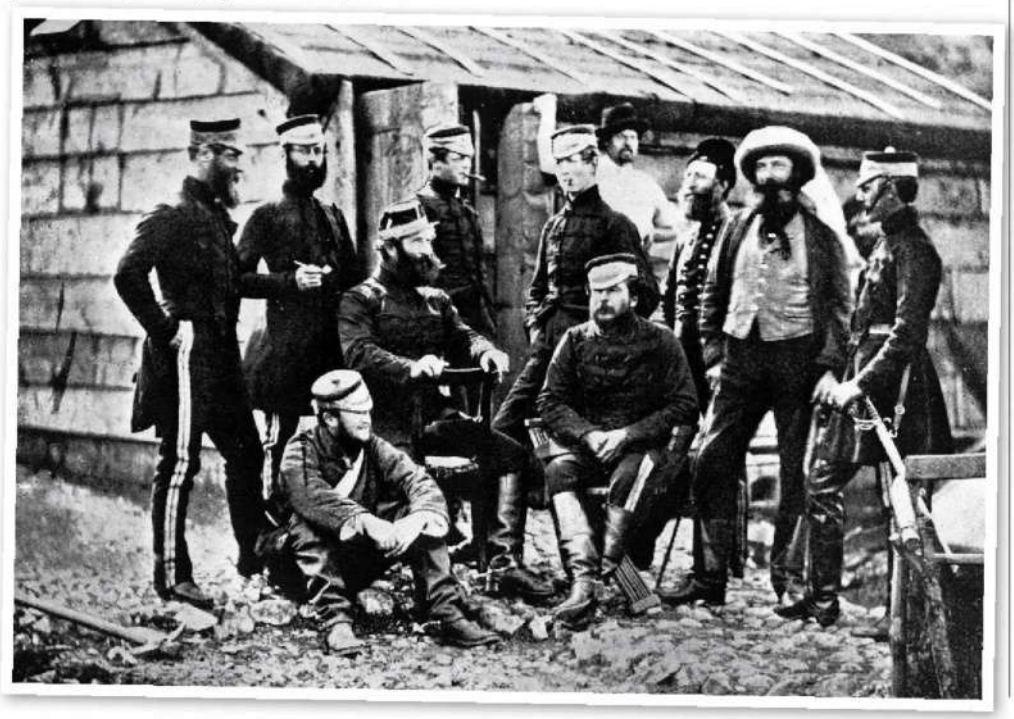
For everything in between, i.e. the key life events, consider any changing occupations and workplaces, medical information, property purchases and house moves, changes in religion, admission and discharge from the workhouse, divorce, military service or appearances in court whether as the accused, a victim or a witness. You may decide that major events that happened to their close relations should also be included, such as a spouse or child being involved in a crime.

Other sources

For the 'life' events, this is where you'll often find there are some large gaps where no records have been discovered. So, depending on the period in question consider researching court records, employment records, title deeds, poll books, newspaper articles, equity court records, militia listings, enclosure awards or school registers, among many others. Start by researching what sources are available for the period in question. There are huge numbers of records held by archives that are not catalogued by a person's name, so try searching using their place of residence, workplace or school to see what records survive.

You may also wish to add some historical context on a national or even international scale. This could include details of the reigning monarch, notable inventions, like the car, or any big news stories, including wars. Again this is your choice depending on what you think will help place your ancestor in history, what events they may have been interested in and what may have affected them, for example a change in employment law or a country-wide heatwave. (It's worth noting here that Ancestry disabled their historical insights feature on LifeStory in 2021, meaning only people who saved events prior to that date will see them.)

Perhaps of more relevance is to add local news stories to your ancestor's timeline. These can be found by browsing local newspapers from the time your ancestor lived in the area using the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) or Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). You may even discover that there was a particular scandal or crime in their village that your ancestor would have known about.



Adding historical dates, such as the outbreak of the Crimean War, can give context to your ancestor's timeline

HOW TO CREATE A TIMELINE CHART

Chloe O'Shea highlights three software options that will help you on your timeline journey

Using software to create a timeline can be a great time saver but there are pros and cons to consider before you start. There are many options you can choose from. Genelines (**progenygenealogy.com/products/timeline-charts**) is a great start, as it allows you to upload a GEDCOM file and gives you the ability to choose from seven different timelines and charts and highlights areas where more research is needed (see our step-by-step guide on page 52).

Treelines allows you to add photographs, notes and source details

Also GEDCOM-compatible is Treelines (**treelines.com**), which allows you to edit your timeline to add photographs, notes and source details. When your timeline is complete there's also an option to share it and, best of all, the site is free. You can take a tour via their homepage, which can help you decide if this is the site for you.

Another option is Tiki-Toki (**tiki-toki.com**) which has a much more modern feel. You can choose between a free account, allowing you just one timeline, or a premium account of varying price ranges. This is a good option if you're looking for a particularly aesthetic timeline.

Adding in this extra 'colour', so to speak, can help you understand the choices your ancestor made. You may find that they relocated for work shortly after their factory was shut down or perhaps they emigrated to be closer to their siblings after their spouse died. When looking at the timeline for my great great grandmother, for example, I realised she remarried just five weeks after her first husband died. It makes me wonder – did her partners overlap?

You can add burial details and published obituaries to a timeline

Format options

Beyond Ancestry, you can also use a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets to create a timeline. This can be easily modified to add as many columns and rows as you wish. The first column should always relate to the date of the event but the others can be adapted in whatever way suits your needs best. When using a spreadsheet ensure that the date is in the correct format (DD/MM/YYYY) and be consistent with its presentation for best results.

One time-saving idea is to maintain separate spreadsheets with information you can reuse for multiple ancestors. This could include a spreadsheet with dates of national news stories which you can then copy and paste into each ancestor's timeline. If you then order the events by date, these stories will be interspersed among their personal events in chronological order, giving their life historical context. You could also create a spreadsheet of genealogical records and the dates that they're available for. This is very useful to help you fill in the gaps on a timeline.

Share the history

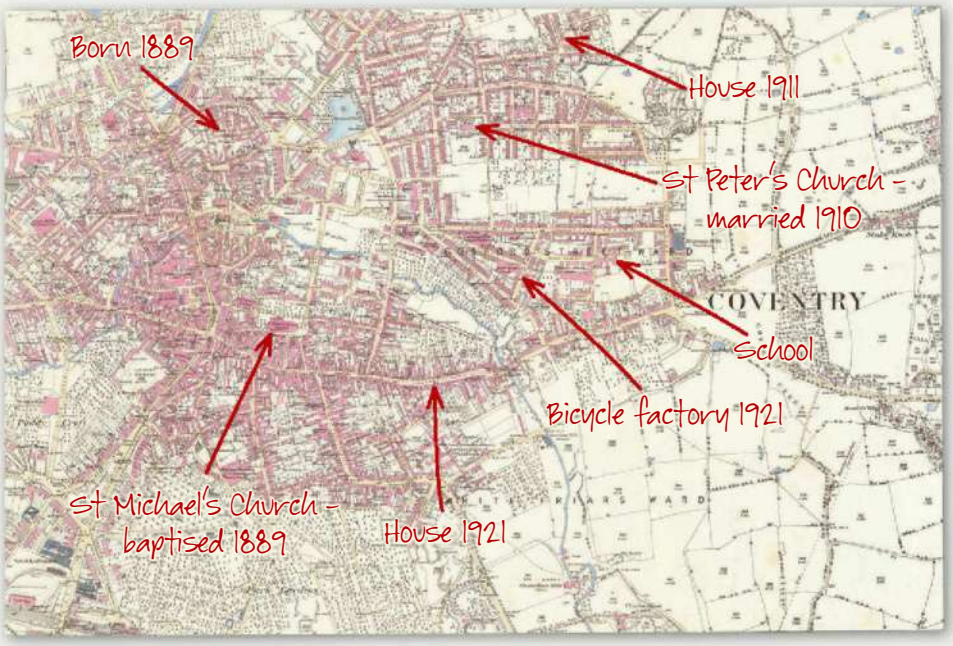
As mentioned at the start, timelines are also great places to spot any notable errors in your family research. This could be anything from a woman recorded as having a child when she was 60 or having two children born six months apart.

It's always a good idea to share your timelines with other family members, too. Who knows, even a cousin who has no interest in family history could view a timeline of somebody they knew and provide a crucial piece of missing information.

Once you see your ancestor's personal and family events in the context of local and national history it can really give you a sense of who they were and what the world was like when they were alive. And any tool we can access that makes us feel closer to our ancestors can only be advantageous.

HOW TO MAKE AN ANCESTRAL MAP

Plotting a person's life events on a map can help add context to their story, says Chloe O'Shea



Towards the top of Ancestry's (**ancestry.co.uk**) LifeStory tool is a map which roughly plots a person's key life events. The map can be particularly helpful if your ancestor moved around the country a lot. For more detailed mapping, or if your ancestor lived in the same area from birth to death, download an OS map of the town or village from **nls.maps.uk** and annotate it using points from your timeline. Where possible you can mark on their places of residence, the local church and any other building that appears in their timeline, such as their school or workplace. Once the places are all plotted on to a map this can be used in conjunction with your timeline as a visual aid. This may then prompt questions such as what transport was available to them at the time to move from one place of residence to another, and what sites did they see on their walk to work every day? As well as a map, you may decide to add in photographs or illustrations. Even if you have no photographs of an ancestor, you may wish to include one of their places of residence or church. Illustrations may include the style of clothing from the time they lived in or sketches of the tools of their trade. Images such as these can help contextualise the period within which our ancestors lived.

CHLOE O'SHEA is the author of *Discover Your Dorset Ancestors* (Family History Books, 2022)

An elderly Irish male immigrant (centre) waiting at Ellis Island, c1920

IRISH MIGRATION IN 5 RECORDS

Paul Wilkins shares some tips on finding ancestors that moved from Ireland to America

Ireland is a country characterised by emigration. It has a long history of people leaving its shores to travel to various parts of the world. In fact, it is estimated that half of all the people born in Ireland since 1820 have emigrated and that more than 70 million people worldwide can claim Irish ancestry.

Although Irish migrants travelled all over the globe, the United States of America was the biggest draw. Not everyone heading to America made it there, many didn't get beyond Liverpool, but it's estimated that over six million people born in Ireland have emigrated to the US since 1820.

During the 18th century approximately a quarter of a million Irish settlers travelled to America. These were predominantly Presbyterians from Ulster, who were originally descended from the Scots Presbyterians, and who mainly settled in Pennsylvania. In North America they were referred to as Scots-Irish. In the first American census in 1790 it showed that out of a population of three million people, 44,000 were Irish-born and 150,00 claimed Irish descent.

Paying for passage, even in steerage, was beyong the means of many. According to an article published in the *Sligo Journal* of 1846: "The cost of passage from Sligo to Quebec, and thence to New York will not exceed £2 1s 6d". This was at a time when the the average labourer in Ireland, if he was lucky enough to be in work, was earning just 2s 6d a week.

There were a number of alternative ways to pay for passage, including via charitable institutions and private philanthropists. Irish Poor Law Boards of Guardians also financed emigration. Formed in 1838, the boards had responsibility for ▶

PAUL WILKINS runs family history workshops and courses at Warwickshire Record Office

administrating public relief and emigration was considered an effective way of reducing an impoverished population.

The Irish parliament also passed legislation which subsidised transport. Some went through assisted emigration schemes financed by landlords, who gave their tenants enough money for a passage or even hired ships to transport them. In the 17th century, Irish migrants to Virginia went as indentured servants, providing seven years of labour in return for their passage as well as board and lodging.

The passage took about six to 10 weeks, most journeys happened in the spring and summer, and those travelling in steerage (the cheapest option) had to provide their own provisions. Mortality rates were, at one point, as high as 40% in what were known as "Coffin Ships". In a first-hand account of the journey on the *Ajax* in June 1847, Robert Whyte from Dublin wrote in his book, *1847 Famine Ship Diary*, of the hardships as disease spread. He described one woman whose "head and face had swollen to almost unnatural size, the latter being hideously deformed". In 1845 Brunel's steamship, the *SS Great Britain*, completed the journey in just 14 days and 21 hours. By the 1860s sailing ships had been almost entirely replaced by steamships, making the journey faster and safer.

There were myriad reasons why people left Ireland: oppression by British landlords; vanishing economic opportunities; poverty and the Great Famine in the 1840s. The United States Homestead Acts of the 1860s enticed migrants by offering the opportunity to buy land cheaply. Also, family members who had already gone out to America sent letters back promoting the new life and encouraging family members to follow often helping to pay for the fare, leading to chain migration.

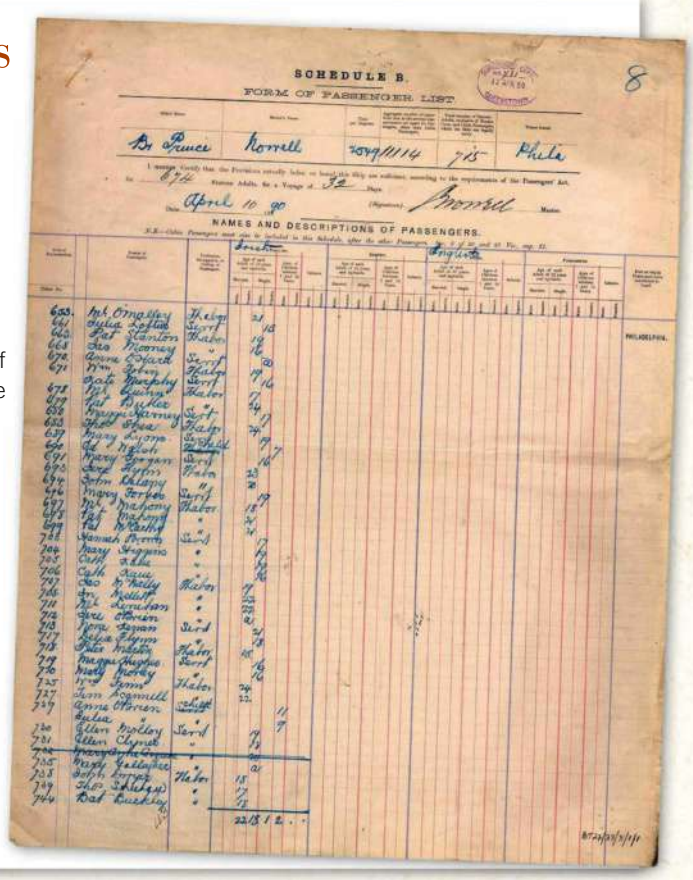
If you are trying to trace someone who emigrated to America from Ireland, then here are five places you should be looking for records.

Passenger Lists

Ancestry.co.uk and **findmypast.co.uk** have lists of passengers leaving the UK from 1890-1960 for long-distance destinations, including America and Canada.

America has comprehensive passenger lists for ships arriving in their ports from 1820, which provide the origin of the emigrant, the port of departure of the ship and the nationality of the passenger. It wasn't until 1893 and the Immigration Act that the former address in Ireland of an emigrant was recorded. **heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger** provides free access to 65 million records of passengers arriving in the port of New York from 1820–1957.

In 1895 it was also noted that 40% of all passengers arriving in Canada were actually bound for the USA, as the fare was cheaper. Unfortunately few records have survived.

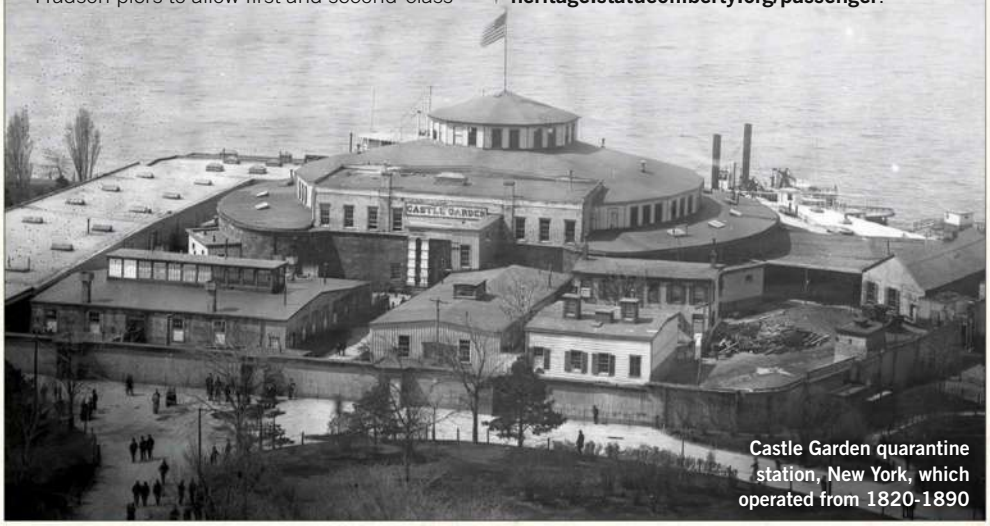

SCHEDULE B.
FORM OF PASSENGER LIST
NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF PASSENGERS.

Quarantine Station Records

When Irish migrants arrived in Canada they were usually quarantined at Grosse Island for approximately 15 days. **tinyurl.com/grosse-island** has records from 1832 to 1937.

If a passenger arrived in New York between 1820 and 1890 they went to the quarantine station at Castle Garden. In 1892 Ellis Island was opened and it continued until 1924, welcoming 3.5 million Irish migrants through its doors. When ships entered New York harbour, they would dock at the East River or Hudson piers to allow first and second-class passengers to disembark. The third-class passengers were then taken by ferry to Ellis Island and there subjected to hours of medical and legal inspections. In order to enter the US, they would need to show they had at least $20. The process could take anything from a few hours to several days or even weeks.

Lists of arrivals at both stations can be searched for free at **familysearch.org**, **ancestry.co.uk** and **stevemorse.org**. Ellis Island records can also be searched here: **heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger**.

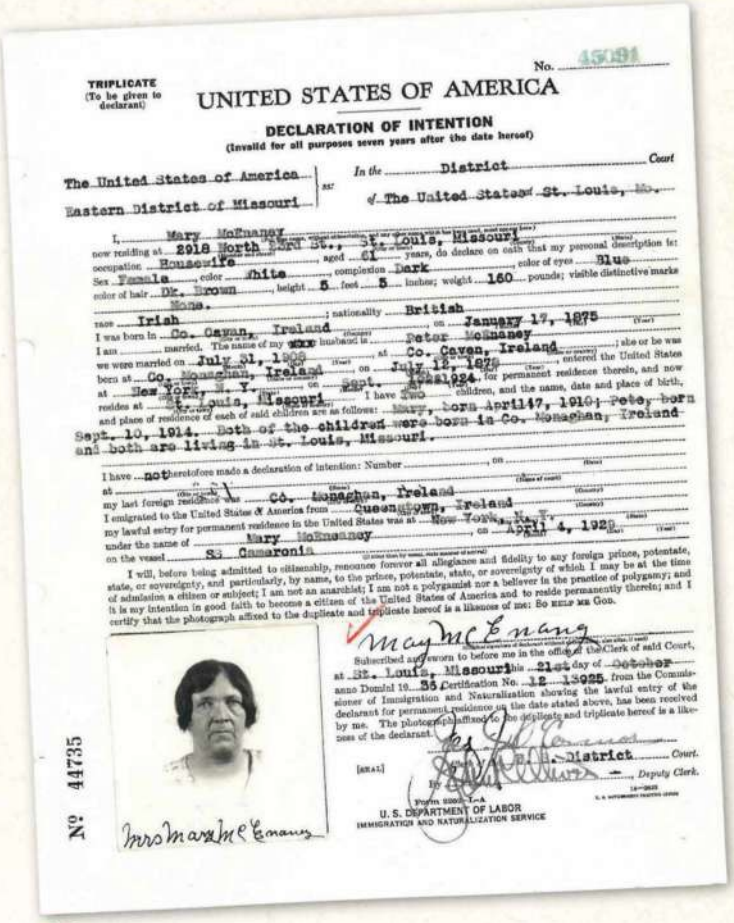


Castle Garden quarantine station, New York, which operated from 1820-1890

Steerage passengers on an Atlantic steamer bound for America, c1850

Famine Records (1846–1851)

The US National Archives (**archives.gov**) has records for passengers who arrived in the port of New York during the Great Famine (1846-1851), when an estimated two million people fled Ireland to begin new lives abroad. By 1870, the total population of the US numbered 38,558,371 of whom 1,855,827 were Irish-born. The US National Archives have provided access to their records for this time period: **tinyurl.com/aad-archives-Irish**. FamilySearch also has a collection of passenger lists for the period via **familysearch.org/search/collection/2110821**.



TRIPLICATE (To be given to declarant)

No. 45091

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION
(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

The United States of America
Eastern District of Missouri

In the District Court of The United States St. Louis, Mo.

I, Mary McEnaney now residing at 2918 North Spur St., St. Louis, Missouri, aged 61 years, do declare on oath that my personal description is: Sex Female, color White, complexion Dark, color of eyes Blue, color of hair Dk. Brown, height 5 feet 5 inches; weight 160 pounds; visible distinctive marks None.

race Irish; nationality British

I was born in Co. Cavan, Ireland, on January 17, 1875

I am married. The name of my husband is Peter McEnaney, who or he was born at Co. Monaghan, Ireland, on July 21, 1866

we were married on July 12, 1895, at Co. Cavan, Ireland

at New York, N. Y. on Sept. 12, 1924, entered the United States

resides at St. Louis, Missouri and place of residence of each of said children are as follows: Mary, born April 7, 1910; Pete, born Sept. 10, 1914. Both of the children were born in Co. Monaghan, Ireland and both are living in St. Louis, Missouri.

I have not heretofore made a declaration of intention: Number ..... on ..... at .....

my last foreign residence was Co. Monaghan, Ireland

I emigrated to the United States & America from Queenstown, Ireland

my lawful entry for permanent residence in the United States was at New York, N.Y. on April 4, 1929

under the name of Mary McEnaney

on the vessel S.S. Cameronia

I will, before being admitted to citizenship, renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly, by name, to the prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of which I may be at the time of admission a citizen or subject; I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to reside permanently therein; and I certify that the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of me: So HELP ME GOD.

Mrs Mary McEnaney

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court, at St. Louis, Missouri this 21st day of October anno Domini 19 55. Certification No. 12 13925. from the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization showing the lawful entry of the declarant for permanent residence on the date stated above, has been received by me. The photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.

[SEAL] District Court. Deputy Clerk.

Form 8202—I-A
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

No 44735

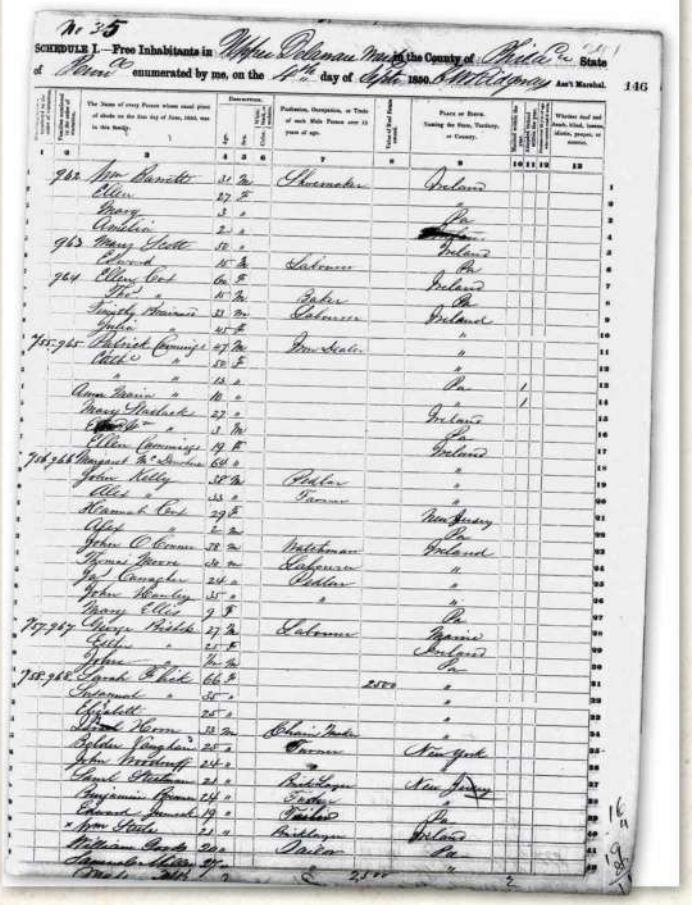
Mrs Mary McEnaney

Naturalisations

Although it wasn't necessary, it is worth checking to see if someone subsequently got naturalised. These records contain information on residence, the ship of arrival and the date and rough place of birth, (usually it will just state Ireland). Later records are more detailed and may even include a photograph. A useful guide is available here: **archives.gov/research/immigration/naturalization**.

US Census Records

A census has been taken every 10 years in America since 1790. From 1850 the returns provide the country of birth and occasionally, if you are lucky, a more specific location. These records are fully searchable for free via **familysearch.org**. If your ancestor migrated after 1901, check the Irish 1901 and 1911 censuses: **census.nationalarchives.ie**.



No 35

SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in Ward Philadelphia Mayor in the County of Phila. State of Penn. enumerated by me, on the 4th day of Sept. 1850. R. Wildgoose Ass't Marshal. 146

962	Wm Barrett	31	M		Shoemaker		Ireland					
	Ellen	27	F				"					
	Mary	3	"				"					
	Amelia	2	"				Pa					
963	Mary Scott	50	"				Ireland					
	Edward	15	M		Laborer							
964	Ellen Ord	60	F				Ireland					
	Thos "	10	M		Baker		Pa					
	Timothy Shannon	21	M		Laborer		Ireland					
	John "	15	M				"					
965-965	Patrick Cummings	47	M		Dry Goods		"					
	Catch "	50	F				"					
	" "	18	"				Pa	1				
	Anna Maria "	10	"				"	1				
	Mary Shelback	27	"				Ireland					
	Chas "	3	M				Pa					
	Ellen Cummings	19	F				Ireland					
966-966	Margaret Mc Sweeney	60	"				"					
	John Kelly	38	M		Peddler		"					
	Ellen "	33	"		Farmer		"					
	Hannah Cook	29	F				New Jersey					
	Alex "	2	M				Pa					
	John O'Connor	38	M		Watchman		Ireland					
	Thomas Moore	30	M		Laborer		"					
	Jas Conaghan	24	"		Peddler		"					
	John Hanley	35	"		"		"					
	Mary Ellis	9	F				Pa					
967-967	George Pribble	27	M		Laborer		Maryland					
	Betty "	25	F				Ireland					
	Jesse "	1m	M				Pa					
968-968	Sarah Pribble	66	F			2500	"					
	Solomon "	35	"				"					
	Elizabeth "	25	"				"					
	Israel Horn	38	M		Chair Maker		"					
	Sylvester Vaughan	25	"		Farmer		New York					
	John Middleoff	24	"		"							
	Saml Stokes	23	"		Bricklayer		New Jersey					
	Benjamin Brown	24	"		Cooper		"					
	Edward Jones	19	"		Tailor		Pa					
	Wm Stokes	23	"		Bricklayer		Ireland					
	William Cook	20	"		Tailor		Pa					
	Samuel McCay	27	"				"					
	Total					2500		2				

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

'I Found Several Ancestors Who Were All Local Heroes'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

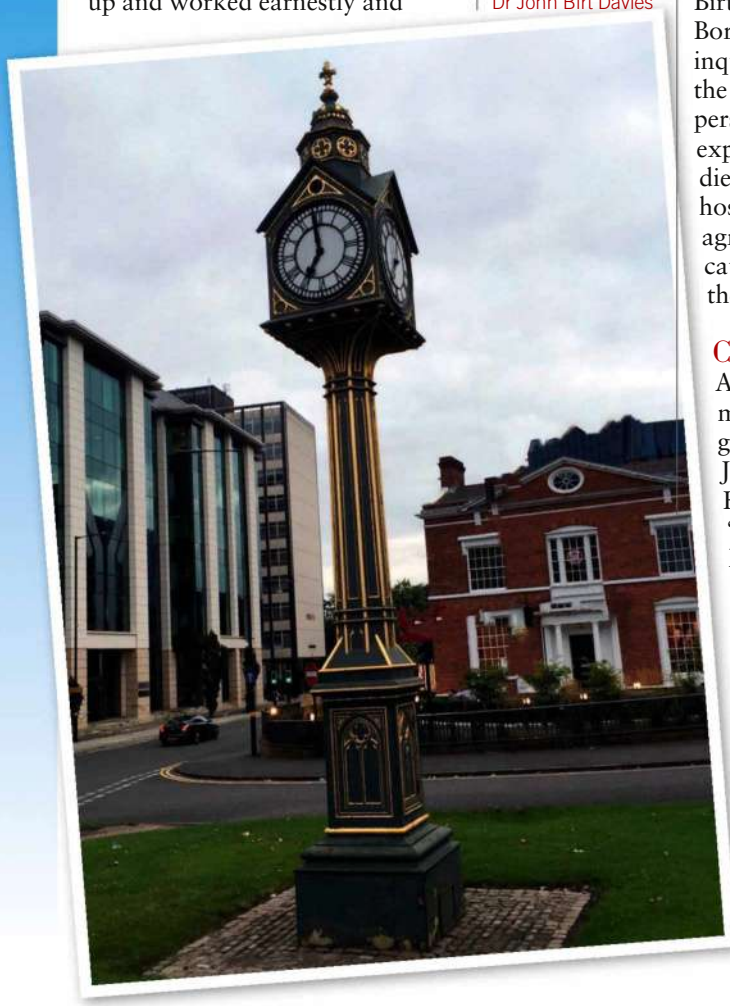
When Angela Coulter discovered an ancestor who helped protect the most vulnerable in Birmingham, she was pleased to find other philanthropic relatives, she tells **Claire Vaughan**

Not long after noon on 9 December 1870, a huge explosion rocked Birmingham. "After a short interval came another, then another and another," read the *Western Daily Mail* of 12 December. The blasts came from the cartridge factory of Messrs Ludlow in Witton. The first, from the priming shed in which 60 women were working.

"The men employed at nearby Messrs Kynoch's factory came up and worked earnestly and zealously at their sorrowful task of extricating from the sheds which were accessible those, who by reasons of their injuries, were unable to extricate themselves. The task was dangerous, and in its details horrible and sickening."

That day, 17 women were killed – most aged between 16 and 25 – and around 50 "shockingly burned" victims were taken to the city's general hospital.

Two days later, *The Sheffield Independent* ran an update: "Dr Birt Davies, the Birmingham Borough Coroner, opened the inquest yesterday afternoon on the bodies of the 15 unfortunate persons, sufferers of the fatal explosion at Witton, who have died since being admitted to hospital." Several survivors agreed that "a wench's apron caught fire by the stove" causing the initial blast.



This Victorian clock in Birmingham commemorates Angela's ancestor, Dr John Birt Davies

UNP/TIM MOSSFORD

Clock Commemoration

Angela Coulter, a retired medical researcher, is the great great granddaughter of Dr John Birt Davies (1799–1878). Her discoveries about this "forgotten Birmingham hero" prompted her to write a book about him, *Probing Deaths, Saving Lives*. But she found that he wasn't the only member of his family who had tried to help those less fortunate.

"I started my family history research in about 2017. From my grandmothers, I'd inherited various photographs and family trees and a few half-remembered stories. I mapped out my own tree and went from there," says Angela.

Her father's side of the family had come from Birmingham. "I happened to be giving a talk at the university there on one occasion and I stayed in a hotel near the city's Five Ways roundabout. In the middle of it was an interesting-looking Victorian clock." By huge coincidence, it commemorated John Birt Davies. "I learned from the plaque on the clock that he was Birmingham's first coroner." Having a medical background, Angela felt a strong connection.

She realised how remarkable he had been as she pieced together his early life and career from information she found in the Birmingham Library (**birmingham.gov.uk**), The National Archives (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**) and the National Library of Wales (**library.wales**). "The son of a Welsh vicar, he grew up in Hampshire and began his medical training as an apprentice in Dorchester," explains Angela. "Then he went to Edinburgh University and became a physician before pitching up in Birmingham, where he spent the rest of his life." Soon after he arrived, he noticed the lack of facilities for treating the infectious diseases that ravaged the poor, and set up a fever hospital. "He was clearly a fiercely independent man, and very committed. He was often called a friend of the poor."

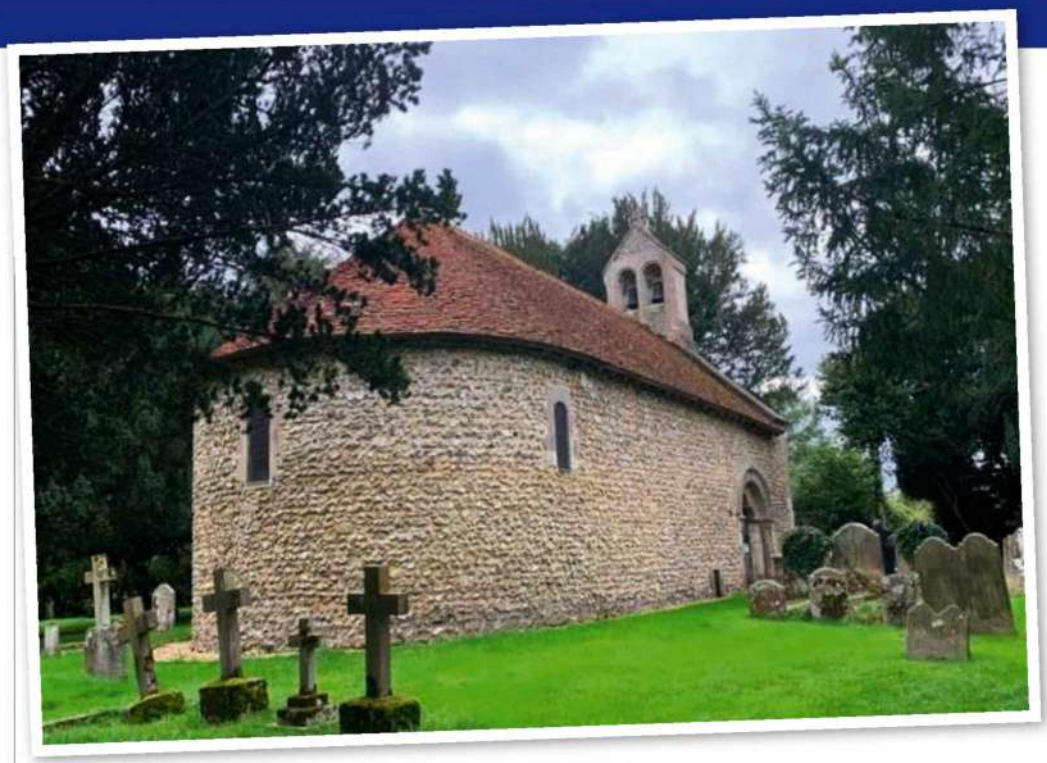
Birt Davies worked as a physician and later moved to a position at Queen's Hospital in Birmingham. "At Birmingham University Library ▶

Retired medical researcher Angela was thrilled to discover so many ancestors who made sacrifices to help those in need

(**birmingham.ac.uk**), I found detailed records of the patients he looked after – what he prescribed for them and so on.

"He set up what became Birmingham's Medical School and was its first professor of forensic medicine before becoming a coroner. During his career, he carried out 30,000 inquests – that's 16 a week – which is extraordinary." Birmingham Library holds an amazing record of all Birt Davies' inquests. "It's handwritten on a huge roll. They don't have it on display because it's too fragile. I was able to look at it on microfiche though."

His inquests were frequently reported in the local newspapers. "The big cases, such as the Witton factory explosions, were reported blow by blow, so there was lots of material."



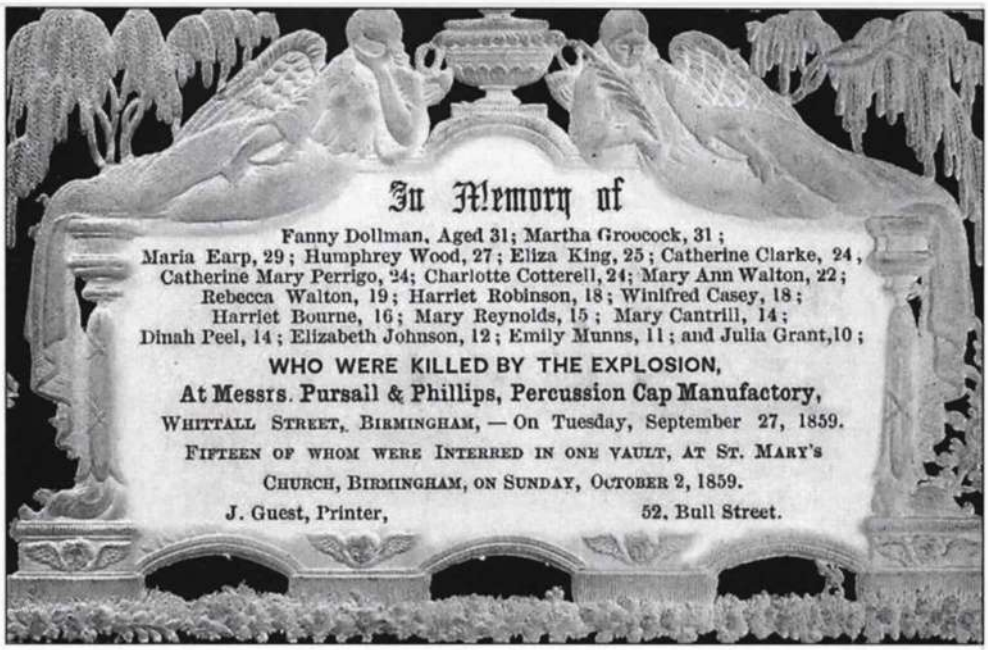
St Swithun's, Nately Scures, Hampshire, where John Birt Davies's father and grandfather were vicars

A Social Reformer

But what was also fascinating, says Angela, is the light these inquests shone on Birmingham's social history. "Back then, you had to recruit a jury for an inquest. Members came from the same neighbourhood as the person who'd died, and often knew them." These people were often the poorest in society, migrant workers who'd come to Birmingham seeking work. "They often lived in very bad conditions in tiny back-to-back houses that were built quickly to accommodate the influx."

Birt Davies' inquests included suicides, murders and the multiple fatalities in local munitions factories. "The arms industry was big in Birmingham – part of the city was known as the Gun Quarter. The people employed there were mostly women and children who worked for an absolute pittance in very unsafe conditions," says Angela. During his tenure, there were three huge explosions that killed hundreds of people. "Birt Davies was involved in the inquests for all of them." His recommendations led to changes in the law that remain today. "He campaigned for safety and better care, raising the wider issues that came out of his inquests. He was a social reformer."

Birt Davies was also a political force in the city. His wife, Sarah Redfern (1805–1882), was from a powerful local family, several of whom were in the Birmingham Political Union. "They were part of a big campaign for Birmingham to get a charter and become self-governing." This was finally achieved in 1838, when Birmingham was designated a borough. He left a legacy to be proud of.



In Memory of

Fanny Dollman, Aged 31; Martha Groocock, 31; Maria Earp, 29; Humphrey Wood, 27; Eliza King, 25; Catherine Clarke, 24, Catherine Mary Perrigo, 24; Charlotte Cotterell, 24; Mary Ann Walton, 22; Rebecca Walton, 19; Harriet Robinson, 18; Winifred Casey, 18; Harriet Bourne, 16; Mary Reynolds, 15; Mary Cantrill, 14; Dinah Peel, 14; Elizabeth Johnson, 12; Emily Munns, 11; and Julia Grant, 10;

WHO WERE KILLED BY THE EXPLOSION,

At Messrs. Pursall & Phillips, Percussion Cap Manufactory,

Whittall Street, Birmingham, — On Tuesday, September 27, 1859.

Fifteen of whom were Interred in one vault, at St. Mary's Church, Birmingham, on Sunday, October 2, 1859.

J. Guest, Printer, 52, Bull Street.

A memorial card to the 19 women and children who were killed in a factory explosion in 1859

A Family Of Innovators

Before her book on John Birt Davies, Angela wrote *A Stream of Lives* containing chapters about him and 12 other forebears, who, like him, had stood out from the crowd.

Reverend Alban Thomas Jones Gwynne (1751-1819), Birt Davies' maternal grandfather, was from Wales but was a vicar in Hampshire. He inherited money and land from two Welsh estates, which he used to improve living standards in Aberaeron where he lived, obtaining an Act of Parliament to develop it as one of the first 'planned' towns in Wales. Now a popular place to

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS / GETTY IMAGES

visit, its pretty harbour is lined with a row of brightly coloured Regency houses.

"He's celebrated in that part of Wales," says Angela, who found a lot of details about him online, as well as visiting the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth (where the family papers are held) to fill in the gaps. "There were herrings in great profusion in the sea off Aberaeron, but the fishing fleet used to get stuck on a sand bar. He decided that the way to change everything for the local area was to invest in improving the harbour, revolutionising the economy of what was only a tiny hamlet before. I visited Aberaeron and there's a plaque to him there on the harbour wall."

Another family member who trod her own path was Jane Kerr Davies (1833–1908), Birt Davies' eldest daughter. She never married and lived with her parents until their deaths. Through legacies, she became quite wealthy, and did something highly unusual in those days for a single woman – she adopted a little girl named Charlotte. Charlotte went on to marry Birt, Jane's nephew, but sadly Jane died before they wed.

Like her father, Jane was very independent-minded and in her will decried organised religion. "She wanted to be cremated and have her ashes spread over her garden, which I think scandalised Victorian society." She left the bulk of her money to Charlotte and some to Birmingham University. "Her will made it clear that if any one of her legatees became a Catholic or dabbled in 'psychical purposes', they would be dispossessed."

Jane's brother, John Redfern Davies (1834–1867), also became a doctor. "Like his father, he was very committed to helping the poor and worked in Birmingham workhouse infirmary for a while."

In 1860, he had a bad fall from his horse and went to America to recover. The Civil War was raging, and he offered his services as a surgeon to the Federal Army. "He looked after soldiers involved in some of the worst of the Civil War battles, including South Mountain and Antietam. He devised new ways of treating gunshot wounds and wrote about his work for *The Lancet*. He was seen as one of the brightest young surgeons of the time."

Engraving showing Queen's Hospital, Birmingham, circa 1840-1870

A STATUE OF SISTER DORA

When he returned to England, Redfern Davies continued his work with the poor at Walsall Cottage Hospital. There he met Dorothy Pattison, or 'Sister Dora' as she was known. A vicar's daughter, she had joined an Anglican order. She'd always wanted to nurse, so she volunteered at the cottage hospital. She and John Redfern fell for each other and became engaged, however, she ended the relationship when she realised she'd be expected to stop working after she married.

After they split up, Redfern Davies left Walsall. "He never saw Sister Dora again and died six months later. She carried on, running the hospital, but later succumbed to breast cancer. She never married."

There's a statue of Sister Dora in the middle of the town. "She's a local hero – a sort of Florence Nightingale figure," says Angela, "but she learned most of her medical knowledge from Redfern Davies."

Angela is, of course, proud of these ancestors, who all made sacrifices to help those in need. For her though, there's something even more satisfying in her discoveries. "Family history brings alive things that academic research doesn't – you can actually smell it, you can learn about what they ate – all sorts of detail that the dry academic sources don't give you."

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

RESOURCES

These resources were crucial in Angela's ancestral discoveries

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE

w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**

Most records of inquests haven't survived, but happily they were usually reported in the press and can be tracked down if you search the British Newspaper Archive (also available on **findmypast.co.uk**). Newspaper reports often include a lot more details that the original records did, with background details, descriptions of witnesses and proceedings.

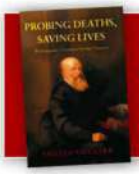
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

w **library.wales/**

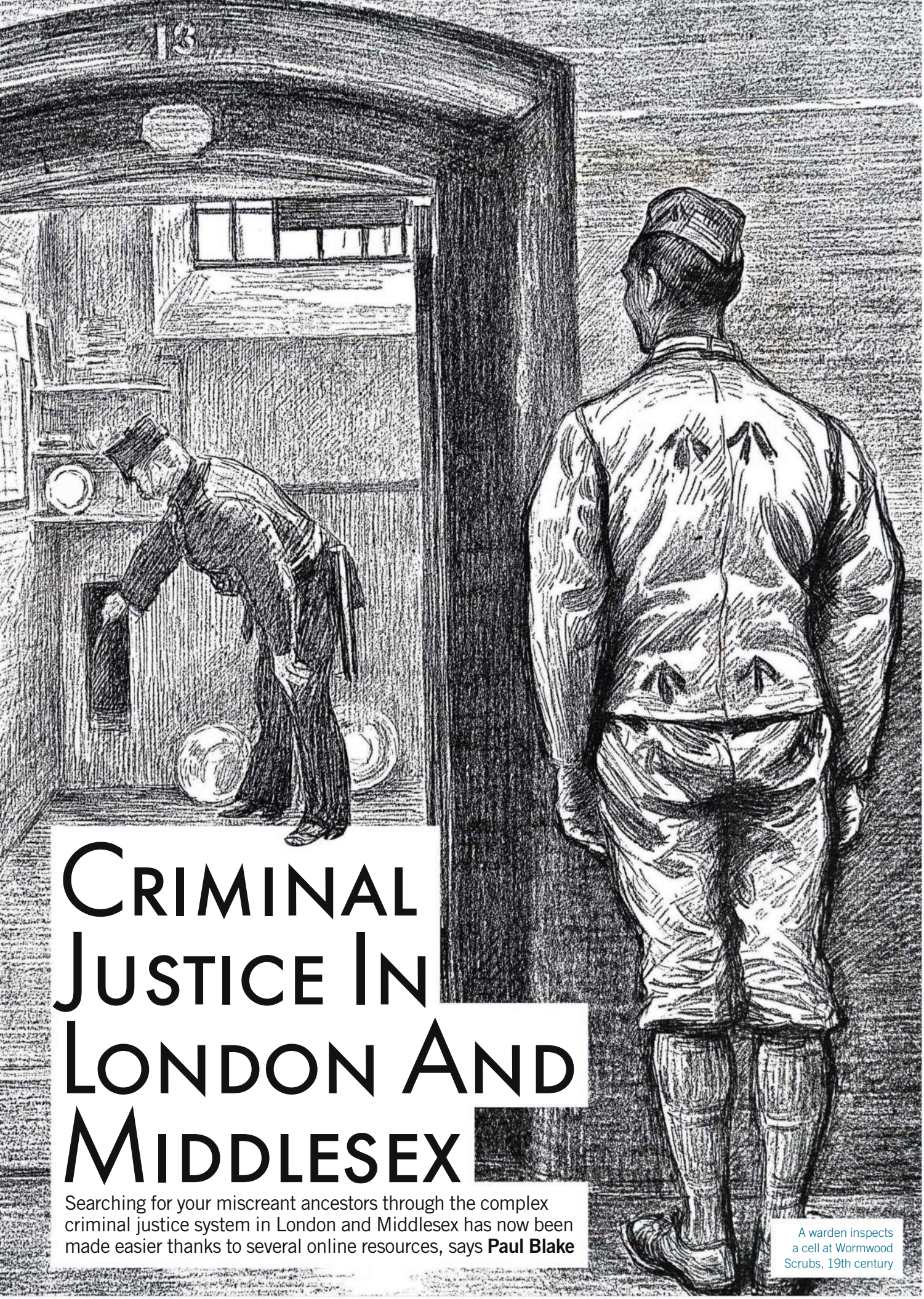
If you come across ancestors who lived in, or just passed through, Wales, you should make the National Library of Wales your first port of call. Here you'll find maps (including tithe maps), newspapers, charters, estate records, correspondence and digital materials. It was here that Angela found family papers relating to Alban Thomas Jones Gwynne.

WILLS AND PROBATE

As well as containing details of money, property and personal possessions, wills can tell you about family members, and their relationships. Some may offer an insight into the writers' personality, as Jane's did with her anti-religious sentiments. Pre-1858 will indexes for England and Wales can be found on subscription websites, and the wills themselves at local or national archives. For post 1858 wills, head to the government's Principal Probate Registry.



Probing Deaths, Saving Lives by Angela Coulter, published by Troubador, 2024, £13.99 (**troubador.co.uk/bookshop/biography/probing-deaths-saving-lives**)



Criminal Justice In London And Middlesex

Searching for your miscreant ancestors through the complex criminal justice system in London and Middlesex has now been made easier thanks to several online resources, says **Paul Blake**

A warden inspects a cell at Wormwood Scrubs, 19th century

GETTY IMAGES

In England and Wales, there were numerous criminal, civil and equity courts where the crown or the people could seek justice at law, but it wasn't until 1873 that the majority of the courts were merged. From around the 14th century, the fate of most criminals would have been determined either at the Assize or at the local Quarter Sessions, with the most serious of cases being heard at the Court of King's (or Queen's) Bench. (For more details on this, see 'Criminal Justice in England and Wales' in the December 2024 issue of WDYTYA? magazine.)

The important exception to the above was in the City of London and the county of Middlesex where the system of criminal justice was different from the rest of the county – and more complicated. Essentially there was no Assize or Quarter Sessions per se and felons and lesser miscreants were tried at the City of London Sessions or at the Middlesex Sessions.

Interior view of the Sessions House at the Old Bailey, City of London, with a court in session, 1809

Until 1889 the county of Middlesex included within its bounds the City and Liberty of Westminster, and the densely populated metropolitan parishes north of the River Thames adjoining the City of London, but not the City itself.

There were several independent judicial hearings in all and the key to searching for a conviction is to know in which court the trial took place. The distinctions between the jurisdictions of the various courts could be blurred, however, particularly as some of the same justices frequently presided over different types of Sessions at roughly the same time.

For Middlesex there were four courts:

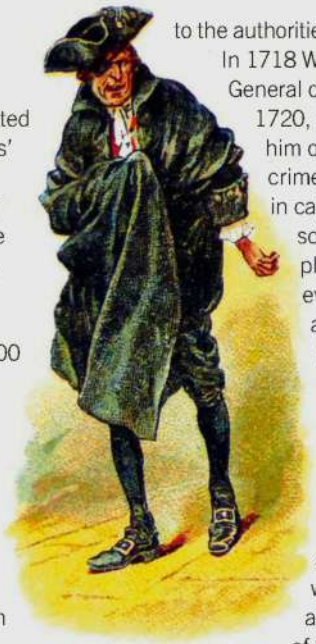
- Sessions of the Peace for the County of Middlesex – met eight times a year in Clerkenwell to consider serious misdemeanours and some more serious offences;
- Sessions of Oyer and Terminer for Middlesex – usually held on the same day as the Sessions to judge the most serious offences, such as treason, murder and rebellion;
- Sessions of the Peace for the City and Liberty of Westminster – held quarterly from 1618-1844 to consider serious misdemeanours and felonies in Westminster. Before 1618 and after 1844, Westminster was included with the Middlesex jurisdiction; ▶

Jonathan Wild, 'Thief Taker' 1682-1725

Meet the early 18th-century criminal mastermind

Jonathan Wild was born about 1682 in Wolverhampton, the son of a carpenter. He settled in London in 1708 and two years later was committed to the Wood Street Comptor, a debtors' prison. On his release in 1712, he'd become well-educated in the ways of London's criminality. Around 1713 he was approached by Charles Hitchen, the City's former under marshal, and became a thief-taker – a profitable occupation paying £40 (around £8,000 today) for each felon caught.

But in truth, Wild was a criminal mastermind, running a successful gang of thieves. Stolen goods were held on to until the theft was publicly announced – he also fenced stolen goods from other thieves. He would then claim to have 'recovered' the booty and collected any reward. When one of his own team, or anyone else, had outlasted their usefulness, or had crossed him, he would hand them over to the authorities claiming the £40 reward.



A cigarette card from 1924 depicting Jonathan Wild

In 1718 Wild named himself 'Thief-taker General of Great Britain and Ireland'. In 1720, the Privy Council even consulted him on the best methods of controlling crime. Wild was indeed instrumental in capturing and bringing to justice scores of petty thieves who plagued the London streets. But eventually, both the general public and his own gang members turned against him. In February 1725, Wild was arrested for organising a jailbreak. At his trial on 15 May he was convicted of stealing 50 yards of lace and sentenced to death.

Hanged at Tyburn and buried at St Pancras church, his body was exhumed a few days later and sold to the Royal College of Surgeons for dissection. His skeletal remains are now on display at the Hunterian Museum.

GETTY IMAGES

The Middlesex Sessions House opened in 1782, replacing Hick's Hall. It was, at the time, the nation's largest courthouse

- Sessions of Gaol Delivery of Newgate for the County of Middlesex – held at the Old Bailey usually a few days after the Sessions of the Peace and Oyer and Terminer to hear and determine the most serious cases. Typically these would have been heard before the Assize in other parts of the country. In 1834 the Old Bailey became the Central Criminal Court.

DID YOU KNOW?
From 1842-c1939, workhouses kept punishment books. Often for trivial misdemeanours, inmates were referred to Magistrates Courts for sentencing.

Records of all the above are held at The London Archives (TLA), with the exception of those for the Central Criminal Court that are at The National Archives (TNA). They are arranged by the court that created them. Generally, you should expect to find details of the indictments, (the official charge made against the accused), together with details of the verdict and the sentence given by the judge. You may also find other documentation relating to the trial ranging from administrative documents through to witness and defendant statements. Details of how to access the records held at TLA are given in its *Research Guide: Criminal Court Cases: Middlesex Sessions up to 1889*.

The City of London also had four courts, with similar jurisdictions to those for Middlesex, with the Sessions of the Peace being held at the Old Bailey:

- Sessions of Oyer and Terminer for the City of London
- Sessions of the Peace for the City of London
- Southwark Sessions
- Sessions of Delivery of the Gaol of Newgate for the City of London

Details of how to access the records held at TLA are given in its *Research Guide: Criminal Court Cases: City of London Sessions*.

Court Proceedings

At both the Middlesex Sessions at Hick's Hall and later at the Middlesex Sessions House (for Middlesex cases) and at the Old Bailey (for City of London cases), the grand juries met to vet the indictments and decide whether there was sufficient evidence to try the case before a trial jury. At this point prosecutors and their witnesses, but not defendants, could testify. Those cases for which a grand jury believed the evidence was sufficient

Expert Picks

Paul shares three essential websites that will aid your miscreant ancestral research

London Lives

w **londonlives.org**

1690-1800 – Crime, poverty and social policy in the metropolis. A fully searchable collection of 240,000 manuscripts from eight archives and 15 datasets, providing 3.35 million names.

Connected Histories

w **connectedhistories.org/**

This site brings together a range of digital resources related to early modern and 19th century Britain that allows sophisticated searching of names, places and dates.

The Digital Panopticon

w **digitalpanopticon.org**

London Convicts in Britain & Australia, 1780-1925. Here you can search millions of records from around 50 datasets, relating to the lives of 90,000 convicts from the Old Bailey.

GETTY IMAGES

Old Bailey Proceedings, 1801

Proceeding at The Old Bailey, held on Wednesday 15 April 1801 and published by W. Wilson. The Proceedings, 1674-1913, are fully searchable at **oldbaileyonline.org** and the original indictments are held at The London Archives (**thelondonarchives.org**; OB/SR/363).

1 First case

The first case reported here is for Elizabeth Forrester, aged 35, who was indicted for feloniously stealing a copper saucepan, two iron candlesticks and a pair of sheets. She was found guilty and sentenced to six months in the House of Correction and to be whipped.

2 Second case

The second case here was more serious. Ann Moore, aged just 16, was indicted for feloniously stealing on 26 March, in the dwelling house of Vincent Winch, six Bank notes, each of the value of 2l. and one other Bank note value 1l, the property of Peter Hendrick.

3 Witness

Peter Hendrick gave evidence. He was lodging with Winch at the time and, being a foreigner, an interpreter was provided (not uncommon). The stolen notes had been taken from the £14 he had with him – worth approximately £620 now.

4 Evidence

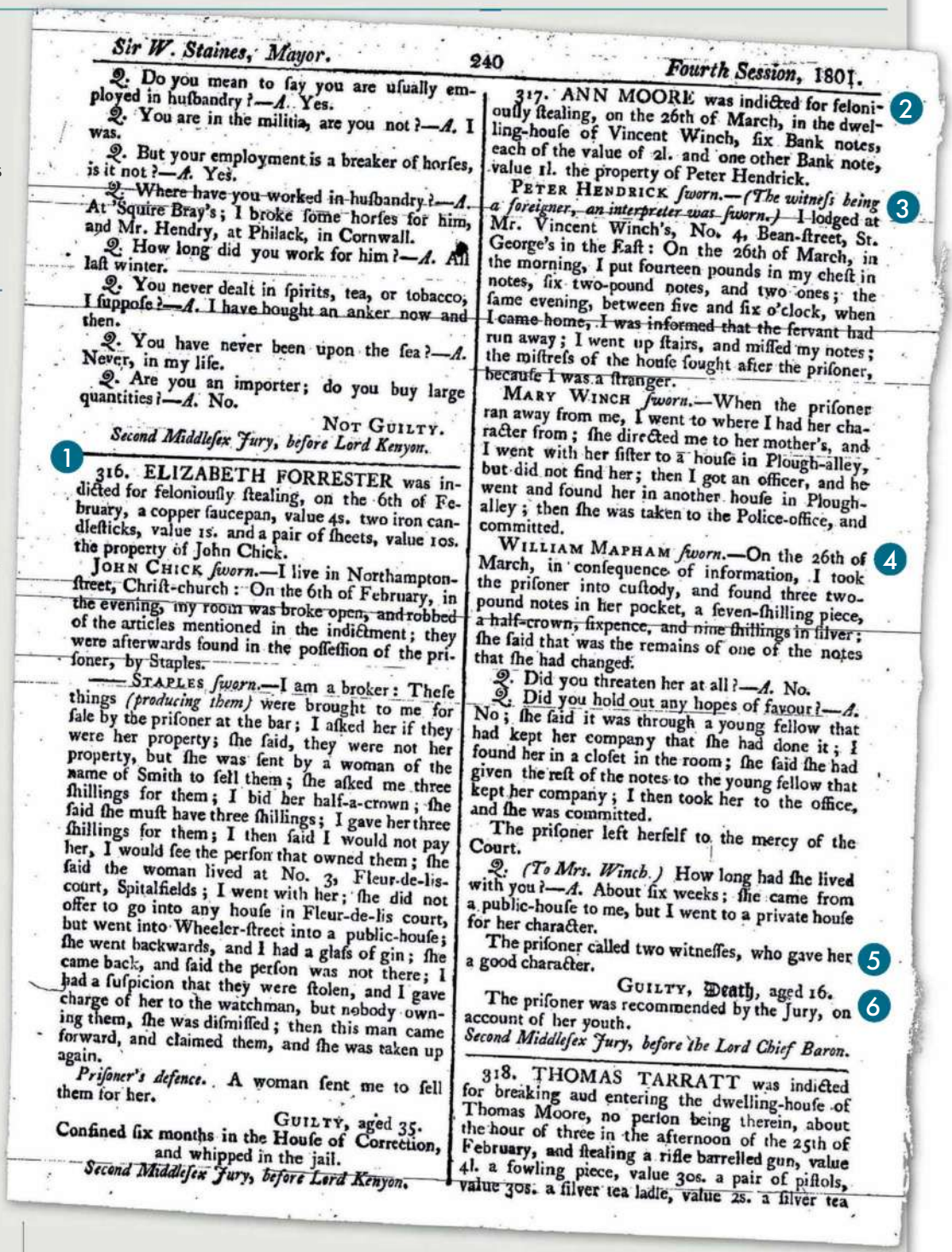
William Mapham gave evidence that he had taken the prisoner into custody, having found her in a closet in the room, and found a quantity of money on her. When asked 'Did you threaten her at all?' and 'Did you hold out any hopes of a favour?' he replied, 'No'.

5 Good character

Ann Moore had not denied the charges and produced two witnesses who spoke to her good character.

6 Death sentence

Ann had let herself 'to the mercy of the court'. She was found guilty and sentenced to death. The jury had recommended mercy on account of her youth and thankfully as a result, on 26 June, her conviction was commuted to 12 months' imprisonment as recorded in The Home Office: Criminal Entry Books, HO 13/14.



Sir W. Staines, Mayor. 240 *Fourth Session,* 1801.

Q. Do you mean to ſay you are uſually employed in huſbandry?—*A.* Yes.

Q. You are in the militia, are you not?—*A.* I was.

Q. But your employment is a breaker of horſes, is it not?—*A.* Yes.

Q. Where have you worked in huſbandry?—*A.* At Squire Bray's; I broke ſome horſes for him, and Mr. Hendry, at Philack, in Cornwall.

Q. How long did you work for him?—*A.* All laſt winter.

Q. You never dealt in ſpirits, tea, or tobacco, I ſuppoſe?—*A.* I have bought an anker now and then.

Q. You have never been upon the ſea?—*A.* Never, in my life.

Q. Are you an importer; do you buy large quantities?—*A.* No.

NOT GUILTY.

Second Middleſex Jury, before Lord Kenyon.

1 316. ELIZABETH FORRESTER was indicted for feloniouſly ſtealing, on the 6th of February, a copper ſaucepan, value 4s. two iron candleſticks, value 1s. and a pair of ſheets, value 10s. the property of John Chick.

JOHN CHICK *ſworn.*—I live in Northampton-ſtreet, Chriſt-church: On the 6th of February, in the evening, my room was broke open, and robbed of the articles mentioned in the indictment; they were afterwards found in the poſſeſſion of the priſoner, by Staples.

STAPLES *ſworn.*—I am a broker: Theſe things *(producing them)* were brought to me for ſale by the priſoner at the bar; I aſked her if they were her property; ſhe ſaid, they were not her property, but ſhe was ſent by a woman of the name of Smith to ſell them; ſhe aſked me three ſhillings for them; I bid her half-a-crown; ſhe ſaid ſhe muſt have three ſhillings; I gave her three ſhillings for them; I then ſaid I would not pay her, I would ſee the perſon that owned them; ſhe ſaid the woman lived at No. 3, Fleur-de-lis-court, Spitalfields; I went with her; ſhe did not offer to go into any houſe in Fleur-de-lis court, but went into Wheeler-ſtreet into a public-houſe; ſhe went backwards, and I had a glaſs of gin; ſhe came back, and ſaid the perſon was not there; I had a ſuſpicion that they were ſtolen, and I gave charge of her to the watchman, but nobody owning them, ſhe was diſmiſſed; then this man came forward, and claimed them, and ſhe was taken up again.

Priſoner's defence. A woman ſent me to ſell them for her.

GUILTY, aged 35.

Confined ſix months in the Houſe of Correction, and whipped in the jail.

Second Middleſex Jury, before Lord Kenyon.

2 317. ANN MOORE was indicted for feloniouſly ſtealing, on the 26th of March, in the dwelling-houſe of Vincent Winch, ſix Bank notes, each of the value of 2l. and one other Bank note, value 1l. the property of Peter Hendrick.

3 PETER HENDRICK *ſworn.*—*(The witneſs being a foreigner, an interpreter was ſworn.)* I lodged at Mr. Vincent Winch's, No. 4, Bean-ſtreet, St. George's in the Eaſt: On the 26th of March, in the morning, I put fourteen pounds in my cheſt in notes, ſix two-pound notes, and two ones; the ſame evening, between five and ſix o'clock, when I came home, I was informed that the ſervant had run away; I went up ſtairs, and miſſed my notes; the miſtreſs of the houſe ſought after the priſoner, becauſe I was a ſtranger.

MARY WINCH *ſworn.*—When the priſoner ran away from me, I went to where I had her character from; ſhe directed me to her mother's, and I went with her ſiſter to a houſe in Plough-alley, but did not find her; then I got an officer, and he went and found her in another houſe in Plough-alley; then ſhe was taken to the Police-office, and committed.

4 WILLIAM MAPHAM *ſworn.*—On the 26th of March, in conſequence of information, I took the priſoner into cuſtody, and found three two-pound notes in her pocket, a ſeven-ſhilling piece, a half-crown, ſixpence, and nine ſhillings in ſilver; ſhe ſaid that was the remains of one of the notes that ſhe had changed.

Q. Did you threaten her at all?—*A.* No.

Q. Did you hold out any hopes of favour?—*A.* No; ſhe ſaid it was through a young fellow that had kept her company that ſhe had done it; I found her in a cloſet in the room; ſhe ſaid ſhe had given the reſt of the notes to the young fellow that kept her company; I then took her to the office, and ſhe was committed.

The priſoner left herſelf to the mercy of the Court.

Q. *(To Mrs. Winch.)* How long had ſhe lived with you?—*A.* About ſix weeks; ſhe came from a public-houſe to me, but I went to a private houſe for her character.

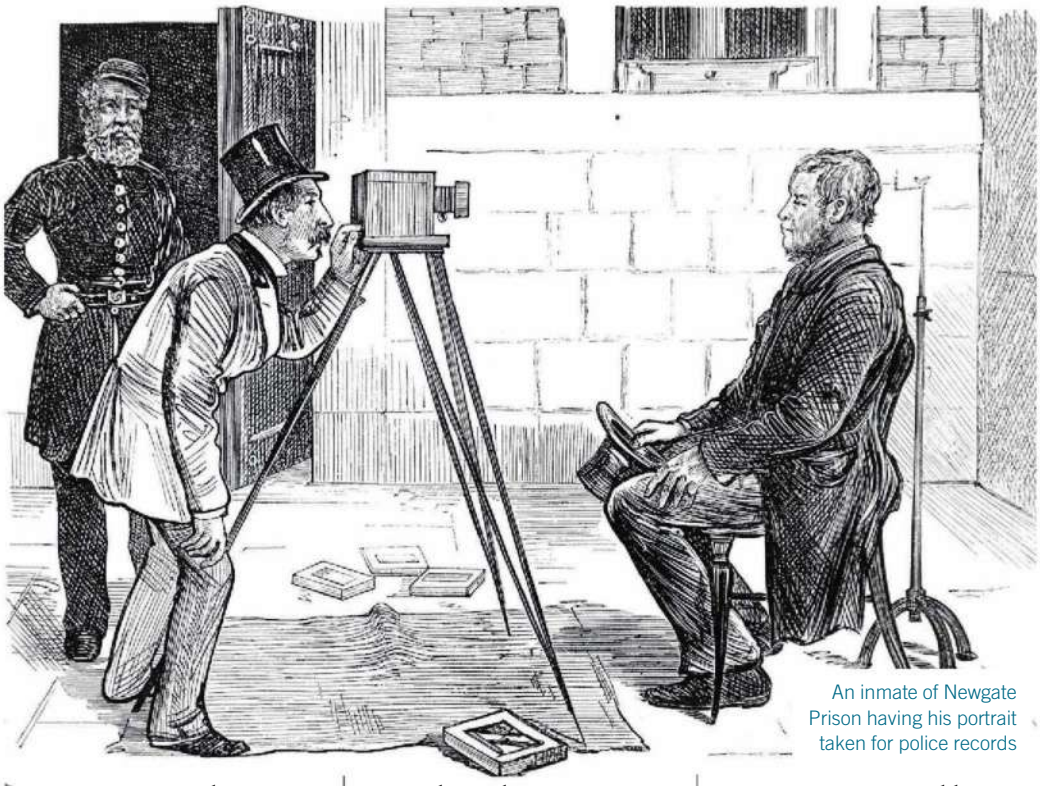
5 The priſoner called two witneſſes, who gave her a good character.

GUILTY, **Death**, aged 16.

6 The priſoner was recommended by the Jury, on account of her youth.

Second Middleſex Jury, before the Lord Chief Baron.

318. THOMAS TARRATT was indicted for breaking and entering the dwelling-houſe of Thomas Moore, no perſon being therein, about the hour of three in the afternoon of the 25th of February, and ſtealing a rifle barrelled gun, value 4l. a fowling piece, value 30s. a pair of piſtols, value 30s. a ſilver tea ladle, value 2s. a ſilver tea



An inmate of Newgate Prison having his portrait taken for police records

to warrant a trial were approved as 'true bills'; those rejected were labelled 'ignoramus' (or 'not found') and the case was dropped.

From 1674, the Old Bailey Court Proceedings, with few exceptions, were regularly published each time the sessions met (eight times a year until 1834, and then 10 to 12 times a year). These proceedings are detailed accounts of the trials and include particulars of the alleged offence and depositions by witnesses; for those found guilty their age will be given and the sentence they received. However, they do not include the full indictment which is usually the only place that you may discover the residence of the defendant.

'The Proceedings of the Old Bailey' website – **oldbaileyonline.org** – provides, free of charge, a fully-searchable, digitised collection of all the surviving editions of the Old Bailey Proceedings that were published from April 1674 until April 1913. 'Old Bailey Court Records 1674-1913' is also available on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). The website includes a wealth of information about crime, policing and the due process of law. Name searches will reveal all parties involved in a case, not just the defendant(s), so plaintiffs and witnesses will also be identified. Together with newspaper reports these are potentially the richest source of information on specific trials.

Other Sources

The Home Office Criminal Registers for England and Wales, held at TNA, list all those charged with an indictable offence whether or not they were found guilty. These are available online on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). For 1791-1849, Middlesex and the City of London are covered in series HO 26. From 1850 they are included with the registers for the rest of England and Wales in HO 27, which begin in 1805, to form a continuous series up to 1892. The registers are arranged by date and county and show where tried, the name of the accused, the crime, and the sentence if convicted, or if acquitted. These will identify where the trial documents are to be found amongst the appropriate court records.

There are some other extremely useful resources available online. On Findmypast: England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935 – thousands of crime records from TNA; and Newgate Prison Calendar Vols 1 & 2, 1780-1841.

On Ancestry you can find: Criminal Records, 1780-1871; Prison Commission Records, 1770-1951; Calendar of Prisoners, 1868-1929; After-Trial Calendar of Prisoners, 1855-1931; Newgate Calendar of Prisoners, 1785-1853; Registers of Habitual Criminals and Police Gazettes, 1834-1934.

Lastly, London had a whole network of other 'Summary Courts' including Lord Mayors', Sheriffs' and Police Courts. Records of these are held at TLA.

TOP TIP!

Check out as many documents you find references to that relate to the case you're researching, as these may contain further information on your ancestor.

PAUL BLAKE is a genealogist, specialising in London research, and author of several books including Tracing your Insolvent Ancestors (Pen & Sword, 2019).

Resources

Take your research further

WEBSITE

THE LONDON ARCHIVES RESEARCH GUIDES

w **thelondonarchives.org/your-research/research-guides/**

In addition to those detailed in the article, further research guides available on the London Archives website include: Criminal Court cases: an overview; Criminal Court cases: Middlesex Sessions up to 1889; Criminal Court cases: Middlesex Sessions post 1889; Criminal Court cases: City of London Session; Criminal Court cases: County of London Sessions; Criminal Court cases: Magistrates Courts.

BOOKS

Underworld London: Crime and Punishment in the Capital City
Catherine Arnold
Simon & Schuster, 2012
An entertaining and easy-to-read account of criminality in the metropolis. As well as the crimes, Arnold also looks at the grotesque punishments meted out to those who transgressed the law throughout London's history, 'from the cutpurse to the Krays'.

Nether World: Crime and the Police Courts in Victorian London
Drew D Gray
Reaktion Books, 2024
A fresh investigation of a classic Victorian institution, the London Police Courts; exploring the underexamined court records and the pages of a fast-developing newspaper industry, featuring drunks, pickpockets, wife-beaters, and fraudsters.

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Read extraordinary real-life stories that our readers have uncovered while researching their trees

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Cemeteries And Memorial Inscriptions

A gravestone can be a rich source of information about your ancestors

Jonathan Scott picks the sites that can help you locate your forebears' final resting place

Finding records of gravestones and memorials has gradually become easier thanks in part to the work of genealogical groups, whose members have been surveying, photographing, transcribing and publishing cemetery and churchyard memorial inscriptions for years. Some of these collections still only exist in printed form or on CD-Rom. Others might be available as digital downloads, via members-only sections of the society's website, or through partners like Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**) or Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). People-powered hubs, such as Billion Graves and Find a Grave, once rather USA-centric, also continue to expand with photographs, transcribed inscriptions and exact GPS data.

Once you've found a gravestone, it might give clues about status, there may be heraldic devices or symbols to interpret, and the inscription itself can reveal biographical details and family links not found in any other source. But even the most simple, modest marker gives you a physical connection to your forebears, and an ending to their stories.

FIND A GRAVE

W **findagrave.com**

This website began in 1995, a place where founder Jim Tipton could record his pastime of visiting the resting places of famous people. It widened the net to include everyone's graves in 2010, and was sold to Ancestry three years later. It makes our top spot partly because of its mammoth amount of data, but also because it has retained its free, collaborative atmosphere. You can narrow searches by year, location, keywords, or tick boxes to focus on entries with or without photographs or GPS data. Once registered you can contribute by adding memorials or photos, transcribing submitted photographs, suggesting corrections or making additions. The support pages has lots of useful tips, including how to get the best out of the free app.

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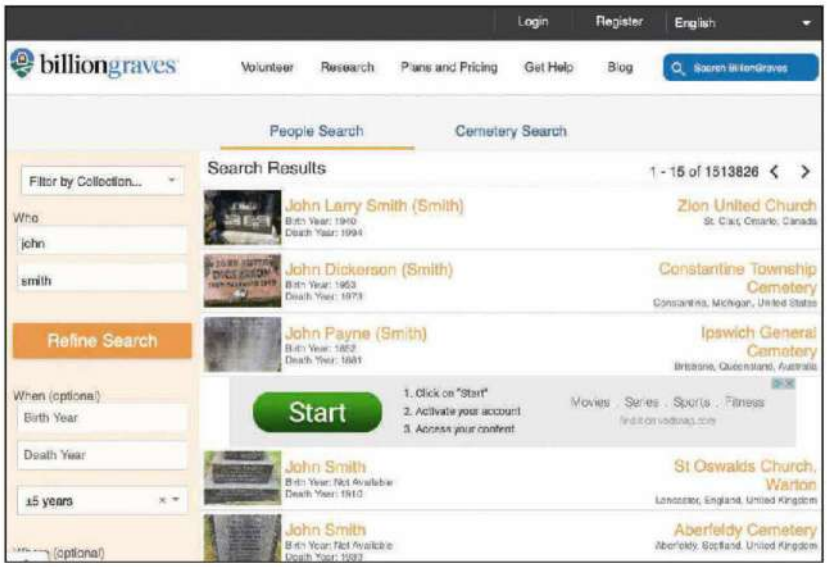
BEST WEBSITES



BILLIONGRAVES

w **billiongraves.com**

This month's close second is the younger and smaller of the two gravestone behemoths. However, it can claim to be "the world's largest GPS-linked cemetery database" because, unlike Find a Grave, every single entry here must come with a photo and GPS location. While lots of the data is free to search, as you start to poke around you'll discover various paywalls. You can subscribe (prices start at $5 a month) or get access by transcribing 250 records or contributing 500 photos. Once signed up you'll be able to see further details, as well as GPS data and high-resolution photographs.

NATIONAL BURIAL GROUNDS SURVEY

w **agintl.org/nbgs-survey/**

This is an ambitious project to survey and accurately map all of the Church of England's burial grounds in England – diocese by diocese, parish by parish, and church by church. Cumbria-based AG Intl Ltd is recording "every square metre of every churchyard", including the church building itself, and photographing all visible memorials, as well as scanning and transcribing the parish registers. The project has been on our radar for several years now, but we're told that the first completed diocese is arriving in 2025. Eventually the site should be an essential bookmark for genealogists around the world who have English roots.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Lorraine Evans is a mortuary archaeologist, death historian and author of *Burying the Dead* (Pen and Sword, 2020)

The arms of John Mackay, a member of the HSS

The use of cemeteries and burial grounds in identifying/establishing familial relationships is often a daunting task, especially when faced with a severely eroded grave marker displaying no identifiable inscription – only a series of carved chevrons, symbols and possibly part of a motto. This is especially true when researching grave markers that date back to the 17th and 18th centuries here in Scotland. When faced with such a conundrum, my first point of call is typically the website of the Heraldry Society of Scotland (**heraldry-scotland.co.uk**).

Living in the remote Highlands as I do, gaining access to physical library collections can be difficult, involving journeys of many hours and hundreds of miles. As such the society's site has become a valuable research tool in the identification of damaged or weather-worn familial grave markers. Founded in 1977, the society provides a wealth of information, including extensive reading lists to aid further research. *An Annotated Bibliography of Scottish Heraldic Materials*, for example, discusses various sources of information on Scots heraldry, including facsimiles of heraldic manuscripts, while *The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands* provides the researcher with a wealth of knowledge on the extensive clan system, structure and Celtic culture of the Highlands, including useful discussions of surnames and designations, together with black-and-white drawings of symbolic chevrons, blazons and mottos.

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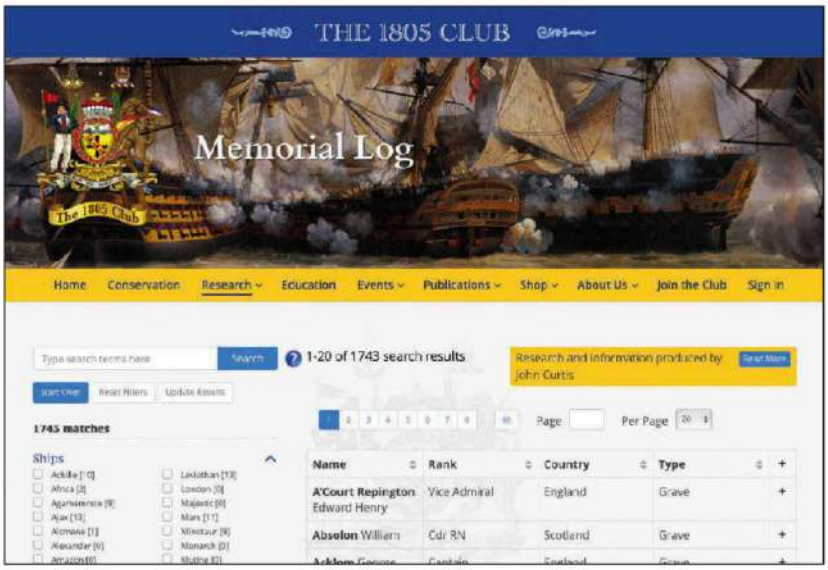

THE 1805 CLUB

w **1805club.org/memorial-log**

The 1805 Club was founded in 1990 as an association for enthusiasts of "the world's sailing navies of the Georgian period (1714–1837)". There's lots of interesting stuff here, but choose 'Memorial Log' from the 'Research' dropdown and you can explore a growing database of the final resting place of some of those who served in the Georgian Navy. Another extremely useful source for this topic is the Royal Museums Greenwich Memorial Database (**memorials.rmg.co.uk**), which documents more than 6,000 church, cemetery and public memorials to seafarers and victims of maritime disasters.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

w **cwgc.org**

The CWGC marks, records and maintains the graves and places of commemoration of military service personnel who died in the world wars, as well as civilians who died as a result of enemy action during the Second World War. It has a free database of 1.7 million deceased military service members from 153 countries, as well as a second database of about 25,000 cemeteries and memorials. There's a steady stream of new content – watch out for VE Day material this year – and there's the "Stories of the Fallen" commemorative resource For Evermore, designed as a place where you can share your family's story.

Go Further

These eight websites are also recommended

DECEASED ONLINE

w **deceasedonline.com**

This UK-focused pay-to-view database has records supplied by local authorities as well as private cemeteries and crematoria.

FAMILYSEARCH

w **familysearch.org**

FamilySearch provides free access to all sorts of cemetery records and inscriptions. Examples include the Cemetery Search (**familysearch.org/en/cemeteries/**), as well as the BillionGraves and Find a Grave indexes.

FINDMYPAST

w **findmypast.co.uk**

As well as burial records in parish registers, this site hosts the National Burial Index for England and Wales with over 12 million records.

HISTORIC GRAVES

w **historicgraves.com**

This site provides information from more than 900 cemeteries in Ireland and the UK.

INTERMENT.NET

w **interment.net**

Here you will find more than 25 million cemetery records, transcripts and burial registers from across the globe.

IRISH WAR MEMORIALS

w **irishwarmemorials.ie**

Explore a growing database of cross-conflict memorials in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

w **tinyurl.com/nls-monumental-inscriptions**

This database gives details of published memorial inscriptions, burial and mortcloth records in the NLS's collections.

THE GENEALOGIST

w **tthegenealogist.co.uk**

As well as its ongoing headstone project, which offers images and transcriptions of thousands of headstones from across the UK, the site has recently added London Cemetery records.

French Huguenot refugees arriving at Dover In 1685

Naturalisation Records

Paul Blake explains how to trace ancestors who applied for British citizenship

During the reign of Edward III (1327-1377) an act was passed to distinguish between aliens and natural-born subjects. To obtain the privileges of a citizen, you had two choices – take out an Act of Naturalisation or obtain Letters of Denization.

An Act of Naturalisation was originally obtained by a bill in Parliament and by the swearing of the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. This gave the recipient the same position, in every respect, as that of a natural-born citizen. It made the foreigner the king's subject, able to inherit land, hold public office, vote and, importantly, included any children who were born before the naturalisation.

Letters of Denization, on the other hand, were obtained by a grant from the Crown, by letters patent. These were not sufficient to enable a man to vote or inherit land, nor did they include children born prior to the date of the grant. (Denization ended in 1873.)

From 1844, the naturalisation procedure was simplified and aliens could simply apply to the Home Office for a Certificate of Naturalization. In 1870, the law was further relaxed allowing any foreigner who had lived in Britain for five years to obtain a naturalisation certificate. In fact, the 1870 Act remains the basis of naturalisation today.

Records can be found in a diverse range of classes at The National Archives

DIVERSE RANGE OF CLASSES

If you have an immigrant in your family tree, you may well be able to find their records of denization or naturalisation. The records, which date from about 1400, can be found in a diverse range of classes at The National Archives (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**), and include certificates, memorials and petitions, general correspondence and so forth. Comprehensive details of these can be found in TNA's online guide (**nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/naturalisation-british-citizenship/**).

Fortunately, there are indexes to all the classes and collections of records concerned. For the period 1509-1800, the Huguenot Society has published comprehensive transcripts ▶

GETTY IMAGES

Naturalisation Certificate, 1872

This Naturalisation Certificate of Emil Komenda is held at The National Archives and was taken from the collection on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) covering the period 1870-1916.

Home Office No. 211,650

Certificate No. 20959

(A.)

Mariner 1 NATURALIZATION ACTS, 1870

Certificate of Naturalization to an Alien.

Whereas Emil Komenda known as Emanuel Kamborak an Alien, residing at 7 Waterloo Street, 2 Plymouth

has presented to me, the Right Honourable Reginald McKenna one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, a Memorial, praying for a Certificate of Naturalization, and alleging that he is a Subject of Germany having been 3 born at Dziergowitz Dist. Kosel Prov. Silesia, on the 16th April, 1872; and is the son of Daniel 4 and Mariana Komenda, both subjects of Germany. a Ship's Pumpman - is married and has ~~three~~ no 5 children ~~under age residing with him, viz~~:

and 6

1 OCCUPATION
The document is headed by the Home Office References including the Certificate No. 20959. Emil Komenda's occupation, mariner, is also recorded.

2 RESIDENCE
In addition to his current address in Plymouth (7 Waterloo Street) his alias is also noted (Emanuel Kamborak) – useful when searching for other records.

3 NATIONALITY
It is recorded that he was a 'subject of Germany' and was born at Dziergowitz, District Kosel, in the Province of Silesia on 16 April 1872.

4 LINEAGE
His parents, Daniel and Mariana Komenda, were also both subjects of Germany.

5 MARITAL STATUS
Further details about Emil are included: he was a ship's pumpman, was married and had no children. The information that has been crossed through refers to the three children of his wife Florence that she had from a previous marriage. This is revealed on the 1911 census return.

6 OTHER INFORMATION
The reverse of the document gives the date of the naturalisation – 10 November 1911 – and details of the Oath of Allegiance that Emil signed on 18 December 1911.

The Russian Vapour Baths in Brick Lane, seen here in 1904, were popular with the immigrant Jewish community

GETTY IMAGES

of all recorded denizations and naturalisations. These then enable the original records at TNA to be consulted if required. Copies are held at TNA or available through the Internet Archive (**archive.org**). TNA also holds records of denization from 1752-1872 (C 97, HO 1, HO 4, HO 44), which are all searchable on TNA's catalogue, Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/**).

As mentioned, before 1844 the only way to naturalise was by a private Act of Parliament, the records for which are part of the Parliamentary Archives (**archives/parliament.uk**). After 1844, there are several series of indexes available at TNA, relating to both naturalisation certificates and to the background case papers. From 1844-1873, naturalisations were recorded on the Close Roll (C 54) with annual indexes (C 275).

CASE PAPERS

Duplicate certificates of naturalisation, 1870-1981, and then to 1986 for people aged over 100 years (HO 334), are indexed on Discovery. Those to 1916 are available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), while indexes 1908-1980 (HO 409) are also searchable on Discovery.

Typically, naturalisation certificates include the full names of the naturalised with any alias used, their current address, place of birth and names of their parents, if married the name of their spouse, and their occupation.

Naturalisation Case Papers (HO 1) include: naturalisation applications to the Secretary of State, 1844-1871; some naturalisations by private Act of Parliament, 1801-1868; and some letters applying for denization, 1801-1840.

Case Papers 1872-1934 (HO 45, HO 144, HO 382) and from 1934 (HO 405) are all searchable on Discovery. However, these are all subject to a 100-year closure and only available following a freedom-of-information request.

In addition to the original form completed by the applicant, the Case Papers can record their nationality, occupation, name of any spouse and children (with ages), date and place of birth and parents' names, current address and any previous address while in the UK; and character references and reports from the police and other local authorities – which can be enlightening.

Although not all alien immigrants applied for denization or naturalisation, for those that did the surviving records can offer a wealth of information about themselves and their families, particularly in any surviving Case Papers.

TOP TIP!

Many immigrants chose to anglicise their names, so a degree of lateral thinking may be required when searching the records for an ancestor.

RESOURCES

Take your research further

BOOK

Migration Records: A Guide for Family Historians
Roger Kershaw
A & C Black, 2009
Written by the head of Records Knowledge at The National Archives. Although written and published several years ago, this remains an invaluable guide to migration records.

WEBSITES

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON NATIONALITY (ACCESSIBLE)
w **tinyurl.com/gov-uk-information-nationality**
This document provides background information about the history of nationality law.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES RESEARCH GUIDES
w **nationalarchives.gov.uk**
The National Archives has produced a number of useful research guides relating to naturalisations and immigration.

PAUL BLAKE is a genealogist, lecturer and the author of several books including *Tracing your Insolvent Ancestors* (Pen & Sword, 2019).

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Melodies of the Danube

Cruise From: Budapest to Vilshofen

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Budapest to Vilshofen - Itinerary Highlights:

Day 1: Budapest
Arrive in Budapest and board your luxurious river cruise ship.

Day 2: Budapest
Visit both the Buda (hilly) and Pest (flat) sides of the Danube River. 'Buda' city tour and a 'Pest' city tour.

Day 3: Bratislava
Bratislava, the "Coronation City of Kings," hosted 11 royal coronations from 1536 to 1830. Explore its history on a walking tour, enjoy a "Tastes of Slovakia" experience, or hike to Bratislava Castle for stunning city views.

Day 4: Vienna
Vienna, the "City of Waltzes," reveals its regal charm on a tour of the Opera House, Imperial Palace, and St. Stephen's Cathedral, or explore by bike. Spend the afternoon at your leisure.

Day 5: Weissenkirchen
In Weissenkirchen, explore Dürnstein, visit Melk Abbey, enjoy wine tasting, hike to Richard the Lionheart's fortress, or bike to Melk. Later, sail to Grein for a visit to Greinburg Castle.

Day 6: Linz
In Linz, choose from a full-day Salzburg tour, including The Sound of Music sites, or visit Český Krumlov to explore its cobblestone streets and historic castle. Alternatively, enjoy a walking tour or bike along Linz's "Cultural Mile" and the Danube.

Day 7: Passau
Explore Passau with a walking tour, a hike to Veste Oberhaus fortress, or a bike ride along the River Inn. Later, cruise to Vilshofen for an exclusive Oktoberfest celebration.

Day 8: Vilshofen
Farewell to Vilshofen and prepare for your flight.

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Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Anthony Adolph is a professional genealogist and the author of 11 books

Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

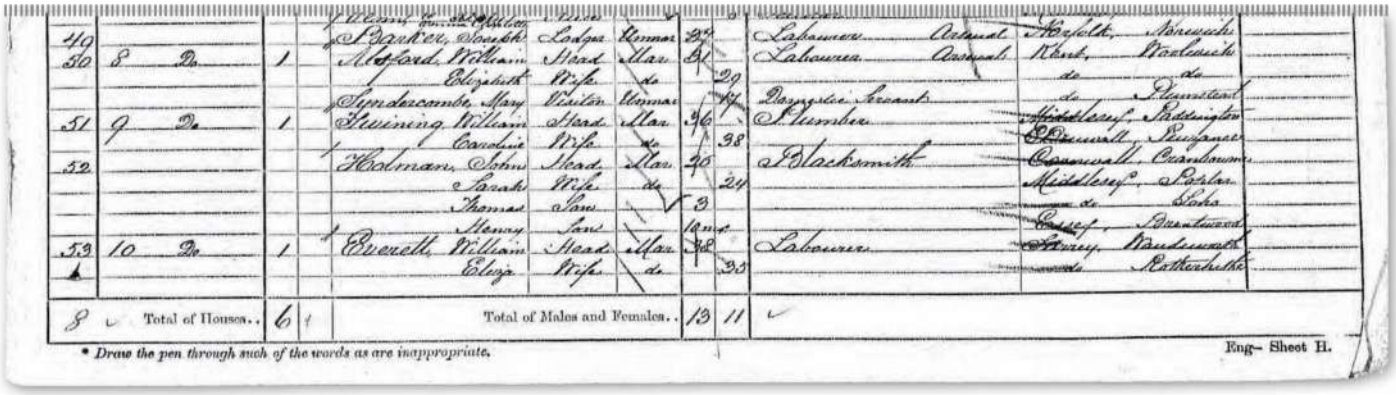
Shauna Hicks is an Australian genealogist, researcher, speaker and writer

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

Alan Stewart is a family history writer, and author of *Grow Your Own Family Tree*

Steve Thomas is a genealogist, author and presenter

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author



49				Baxter, Joseph	Lodger	Unmar	28		Labourer	Agricult.	Norfolk, Norwich
50	8	Do.	1	Mosford, William	Head	Mar	81		Labourer	Agricult.	Kent, Wadewich
				Elizabeth	Wife	do		29			do do
				Sundercombe, Mary	Visitor	Unmar		14	Dressmaker Servant		do Plumstead
51	9	Do.	1	Fewining, William	Head	Mar	46		S. Plumber		Middlesex, Paddington
				Caroline	Wife	do		38			Cornwall, Perranzabuloe
52				Holman, John	Head	Mar	45		Blacksmith		Cornwall, Camborne
				Sarah	Wife	do		24			Middlesex, Poplar
				Thomas	Son		8				do Soho
				Henry	Son		12 m				Essex, Prentwood
53	10	Do.	1	Everett, William	Head	Mar	38		Labourer		Surrey, Bermondsey
				Eliza	Wife	do		35			Yorkshire, Rotherhithe
8		Total of Houses..	6		Total of Males and Females..		13	11			

* Draw the pen through such of the words as are inappropriate.

Eng.– Sheet H.

Our expert genealogist found Thomas Holman living with his father and mother in the 1871 census of Plumstead in southeast London, place of birth Soho

What did my grandfather, a Ship Smith, do before 1911?

Q My grandfather, Thomas Gilbert Holman, was born in 1869/70. The earliest record I have for him is as a 'visitor' in the household of Walter Fitch, in Kelvedon, Essex, in the 1911 census. He is single, aged 41, and a 'Retired engineer general'. Under birthplace, it says 'BS by parentage'. Was he born abroad?

On 12 October 1912, he married Ethel Purl, my grandmother. On the certificate his occupation is listed as 'Gunsmith'. His father is recorded as John Holman, 'Smith's foreman at shipyard'. Thomas died in 1917, and his death certificate has his occupation as 'Ship Smith (retired)' and gives his age as 48. But when and where was Thomas Holman born, and what was he doing before 1911?

Jeff Holman

A Traditional blacksmiths were the first mechanical engineers, so it's unsurprising to find Thomas Holman in a variety of similar roles. He was born in Soho, London according to the 1871 census, but no birth was registered – at least not under Holman. You can find him with his foreman blacksmith father, John, in the 1881 census of Sculcoates, Hull, Yorkshire, living near the docks among shipwrights and marine engineers which ties in with his later occupation.

It appears unlikely that John married Thomas's mother, Sarah Ann Kay, but after moving to Hull, John and Sarah registered their children as if they were man and wife. The General Register Office (GRO) indexes show the mother's maiden name to be Kay.

Annotations on public trees at **ancestry.co.uk** suggest he was injured at work. This is borne out by his frequent recourse to workhouse infirmaries throughout London, and a stay as a patient in St Marylebone Workhouse in 1906, listing his mother as next of kin. Thomas worked as a carpenter at that time, so he had all the complementary skills to be a gunsmith.

John was born in Camborne, Cornwall. Several other individuals of this name were registered around the same time and the danger is that these have been conflated.

Try and trace John before the 1871 census of Plumstead to confirm which one born in Camborne c1845 he must be. See if he was a blacksmith or apprentice before he left Cornwall and trace the fate of the other Johns.

In 1911, the enumerator either exceeded his brief or didn't read his instructions properly. If you scroll back and forth through the whole document, you'll notice that he entered "British subject by parentage" against virtually every person.

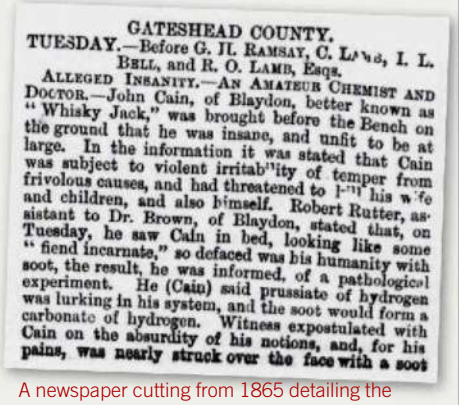
Steve Thomas

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

Did 'Whisky Jack' really go to Australia?

Q My great great grandfather was John Cain, alias 'Whisky Jack', the illicit whisky distiller of mid-Victorian Durham. In 1855, he was arrested for the murder of Dr Robert Stirling, but was acquitted in 1856. Local MP, Joseph Cowen Jnr, took John into his employ and he worked there successfully for several years. In 1865, my great great grandmother, Elizabeth Simpson/ Middleton/ Robson, tried to get the allegedly volatile John committed to a lunatic asylum, but failed. Most accounts state that Joseph paid for John's passage to Australia, but what really happened to him?
Stuart McLeod


GATESHEAD COUNTY.
TUESDAY.—Before G. H. RAMSAY, C. L[illegible], I. L. BELL, and R. O. LAMB, Esqs.
ALLEGED INSANITY.—AN AMATEUR CHEMIST AND DOCTOR.—John Cain, of Blaydon, better known as "Whisky Jack," was brought before the Bench on the ground that he was insane, and unfit to be at large. In the information it was stated that Cain was subject to violent irritability of temper from frivolous causes, and had threatened to [illegible] his wife and children, and also himself. Robert Rutter, assistant to Dr. Brown, of Blaydon, stated that, on Tuesday, he saw Cain in bed, looking like some "fiend incarnate," so defaced was his humanity with soot, the result, he was informed, of a pathological experiment. He (Cain) said prussiate of hydrogen was lurking in his system, and the soot would form a carbonate of hydrogen. Witness expostulated with Cain on the absurdity of his notions, and, for his pains, was nearly struck over the face with a soot

A newspaper cutting from 1865 detailing the attempt to have John committed to an asylum

A Unfortunately, there are no centralised immigration indexes for Australia, and it is a matter of searching state by state for someone's arrival. As John was 53, he would not have qualified for a government passage and if his employer did pay, there may not be a record of him.

In 1866, the most likely colonies would be New South Wales or Victoria. Queensland was only established in 1859, but it would be the warmest state. If John continued to have mental health issues, he may have been admitted to an asylum there. Some states have lunacy records on open access, while others have a 100-year closed period. Prison records may also be useful, and access to them is generally after 75 years.

When he married Elizabeth, John used the surname Robson. Therefore, both Cain (and all spelling variants Caine, Cane, Keane etc) and Robson would need to be searched. Both given name and surname are common, making your task harder.

There are a few options to search including digitised historical newspapers on Trove (**trove.nla.gov.au**), passenger lists, asylum records and prison records in each of the states and territories. This is going to be time-consuming.

Some public Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) family trees used the Robson alias. Unfortunately, none appears to have solved the mystery of John Cain's time in Australia.

Without more information on where he settled there, it could remain a frustrating brick wall. Watch for new indexed and digitised resources though, which may speed up your quest.
Shauna Hicks

What happened to Martha Dudley?

Q My 4x great grandmother, Martha Dudley, was baptised on 30 June 1822 at St Lawrence's church, Darlaston, Staffordshire, daughter of Elizabeth Hodgkins and Joseph Dudley.

In 1841, Martha was a servant for Joseph Cockram, but fell pregnant and had an illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth, who she gave birth to at Walsall Union Workhouse in 1844. She had a second illegitimate child, Thomas, in 1846. There is no sign of her after this.
Megan O'Marr

A Martha certainly seems to be a very elusive character. As well as the usual collections of English/Welsh records (a likely looking death record for 1860 was discounted), I searched those for Scotland (at the official Scottish government website **scotlandspeople.gov.uk**), Ireland, Jersey and Guernsey, with no sign of Martha. With the thought that she may have emigrated, I then looked for Martha in the records for the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but again I found nothing relating to her.

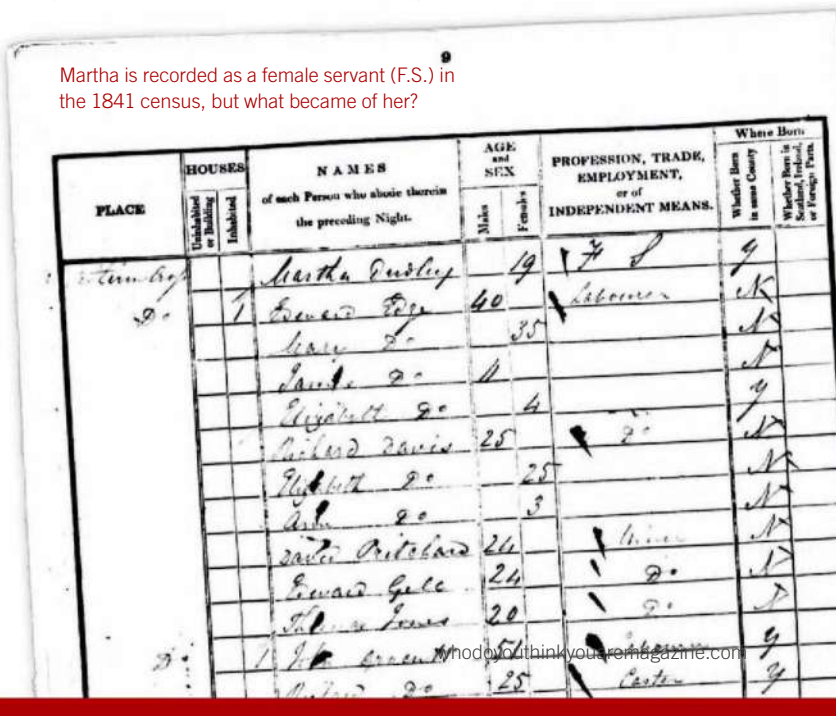
Martha may not have married, but after all this time, she must have died, so I suggest you search the records of burials, such as **deceasedonline.com** (which covers many local authority cemetery records, including those of Staffordshire at The National Archives and East Staffordshire Borough Council), and **findagrave.com** (including 13 sections for Darlaston's neighbouring town Walsall).

Additional websites worth looking at are **billiongraves.com** (which has indexes for England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales on **findmypast.co.uk**) and **gravestonephotos.com**.

Ancestry.co.uk has 21 family trees that include your Martha Dudley, but unfortunately, none contains any further information about her. Although you should be careful about taking at face value information from other peoples' trees, it's worth noting that they show Martha's siblings as Joseph, James, Maria, Humphrey, Jane, Mary, John and Thomas.

Several of the tree-holders are willing to help with others' research, so it may be worth contacting them. I should mention that most of these trees show Martha's mother as Elizabeth Perry and Elizabeth Hodgkins as her daughter-in-law.

You may be fortunate and find the weddings of Martha's siblings or her children reported in newspapers with Martha listed as one of the wedding guests.
Alan Stewart


Martha is recorded as a female servant (F.S.) in the 1841 census, but what became of her?

PLACE	HOUSES Uninhabited or Building	HOUSES Inhabited	NAMES of each Person who abode therein the preceding Night.	AGE and SEX Males	AGE and SEX Females	PROFESSION, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT, or of INDEPENDENT MEANS.	Where Born: Whether Born in same County	Where Born: Whether Born in Scotland, Ireland, or Foreign Parts
[illegible]			Martha Dudley		19	F S	Y	
do		1	Edward Perry	40		Labourer	N	
			Mary do		35		N	
			Jane do	8			N	
			Elizabeth do		4		Y	
			Richard Davis	25		do	N	
			Elizabeth do		25		N	
			[illegible] do		3		N	
			Jane Pritchard	24		[illegible]	N	
			Edward Gill	24		do	N	
			[illegible] Jones	20		do	N	
		1	[illegible] Green	50		[illegible]	Y	
			[illegible] do	25		Carter	Y	

Whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com

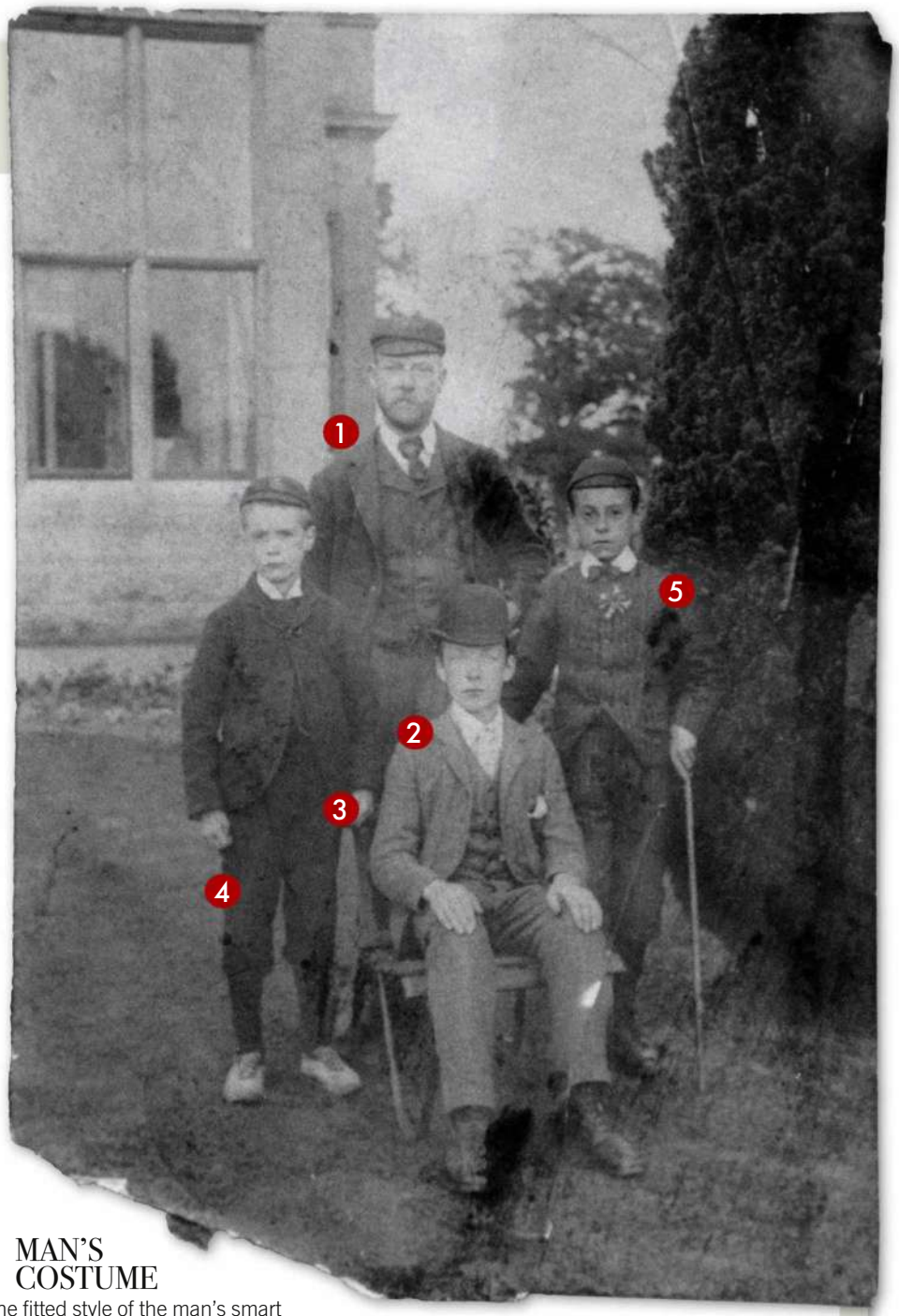
Picture

Which Pettit ancestors are in this photograph?

Q In this photograph, my grandfather, Jesse Jethro Pettit (1880–1962), is standing on the right. The older gentleman could be my great grandfather, Jethro James Pettit (1847–1916), and the other two Jesse's brother, Charles Jethro Pettit (1875–1946), and a cousin. However, could the older gentleman be another relative, Charles Daniel Pettit (1855–1930), with his son, Charles Stanley Pettit (1889–1961), standing on the left?
Stephen Pettit

A This is a cabinet card/portrait: a standard format fashionable from the mid-1880s to c1914. It's set in the garden of a substantial Victorian house, probably taken by a professional photographer hired to visit these ancestors at their home, or a location well known to them. It apparently depicts two generations: a mature man with three sons, or possibly son/sons and their cousin/cousins.

To date this and identify individual subjects, we must study their appearance. All dressed according to their respective ages, the seated lad and man wear three-piece adult suits with long trousers, the young boys, juvenile knickerbockers. The style of all their clothes and caps indicates a timeframe of c1890–1900. Only if the year is c1890–93, could the boy on the right be Jesse b1880, aged here 10–13 years. The other boy is aged about eight to 10 years: there isn't nine years between them, so he cannot be Charles Stanley b1889. However, the youth, aged 15–19 years, fits Charles Jethro (b1875), while the man could be either Jethro James or Charles Daniel. You are on the right track, but some identities need firming up.
Jayne Shrimpton



1 Man's costume

The fitted style of the man's smart three-pieced lounge suit and his neat, peaked cloth cap are all typical of the 1890s, while his turned-down, starched collar is an 1890s/early 1900s mode.

2 Youth's clothes

As would be expected of a 'teenager', the seated youth wears the most stylish adult clothes, including a semi-formal bowler hat, its tall crown a fashion of the late 1880s/1890s.

3 Boy's outfit

Young Victorian boys wore knee-length knickerbockers, progressing to 'grown-up' long trousers when aged about 11–13, depending on factors such as height and their family/occupational circumstances.

4 Youngest boy's clothing

The youngest boy, left, wears school/sports clothes including blazer-style jacket, white sports shoes and a round sports cap or school cap with badge.

5 Sunday best

The right-hand boy (your grandfather, Jesse) wears a smarter 'Sunday best' or school suit comprising fitted morning jacket and matching knickerbockers, with a neat cap and starched Eton collar.

Are the Cecils my ancestors?

St Michael and All Angels Church, Aston Clinton, where Sarah Smyth was likely baptised and married

Q I've traced my father's Brill family (from Weston Turville, Buckinghamshire) back to Frances Sanford (1580–1657), who married Henry Smyth junior (1586–1648). Their daughter Sarah Smythe (b1625), married William Goodson (1624–1673). Two family history sites show Frances as the daughter of William Cecil, 1st Lord Burleigh, born as Francesca. According to a genealogy of the Cecils by G Ravenscroft Dennis, Francesca "did not long survive her birth", although I found a reference to her dying in Wimbledon, aged 32. Can you help?
Ann Shaw

A You are right not to accept any Cecils as ancestors until you have proved the connection, and you are correct to be cautious of online family trees which contain a huge number of incorrect connections.

A transcription on **findmypast.co.uk** of the marriage of Sarah Smyth to William Goodson at Aston Clinton (next to Weston Turville), Buckinghamshire, on 14 September 1654, states that her father was Henry Smyth junior, husbandman (a small landowner).

It is unusual for pre-1837 parish registers to name fathers in such detail, but 1654 was the middle of the Commonwealth and record keeping was disorderly, so extra information is possible and you should check the original in Buckingham Archives. If it is correct and applies to your family, then Henry was a farmer of a relatively small amount of land. His wife was likely to have been from a similar background – and not the daughter of Elizabeth I's most powerful minister.

There is a likely baptism for Sarah Smyth at Aston Clinton on 9 January 1624, daughter of Henry and Alice (not Frances), and a marriage for Henry Smyth and Alice Dover on 19 July 1624, that need to be explored. To help confirm or deny that these are relevant, you could seek Sarah's burial as Sarah Goodman to see if an age is recorded, and whether it matches a birth in 1624. Further searches of the parish registers and wills for the Aston Clinton/Aylesbury area should tell you more about this family and lead you to their correct family connections.
Anthony Adolph

TOP TIP The recording of births, marriages and deaths between 1645 and 1660 was chaotic, with a move away from parish registers to a civil form of registration. Many records have been lost, so don't be surprised if you find a gap in your tree.

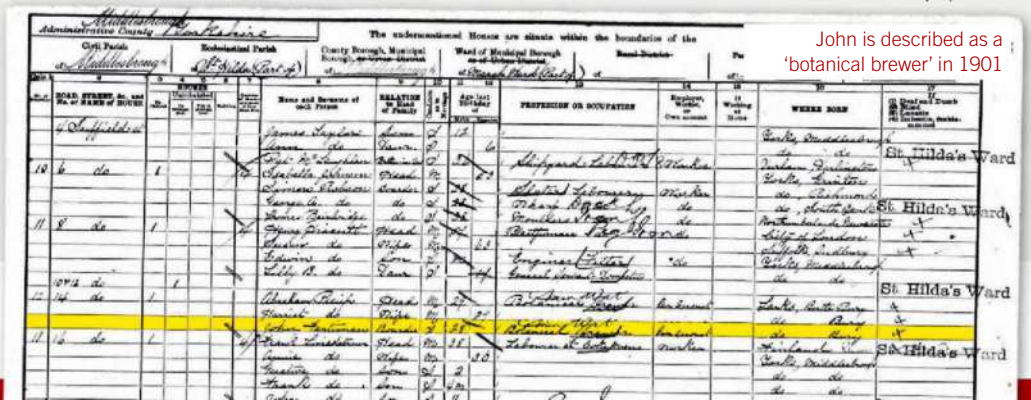
Where is John Fentiman after 1911?

Q I'm trying to find my great grandfather, John Fentiman, after 1911. Born 1872 in Bury, he married my great grandmother, Caroline Allen, in Middlesborough in 1901, and they settled in Southwick near Sunderland. Directories show John as a botanical brewer there until 1910, but my grandmother said he was an alcoholic who was sent to America, after which the family never heard from him. He's not in the 1911 census and I cannot find him anywhere.
Martyn Speight

A Apart from directories, the last mentions I found of John were a report in the *Durham County Advertiser* in 1906 of him being charged with working an unfit horse, and in the 1908 Durham County Council Register, in which he is listed at Southwick. Since he is not in the 1911 census, it seems likely John left his family between 1908 and 1911.

Outward Passenger Lists, available on subscription websites, contain no entry for John between 1908 and 1913. However, in 1913, a John Fentiman left Glasgow for New York. This looked promising but the New York Arriving Passenger Lists, available on **ancestry.co.uk**, show this was John William Fenteman, of West Hartlepool, so not our man. As the Outward Passenger Lists only include vessels departing for ports with a final destination outside Britain and Europe, if John boarded a coastal vessel before embarking on a transatlantic ship in Europe, or if he signed on as crew, his name would not appear. I searched the 1910–1940 US censuses and the 1911 Canadian census without success.

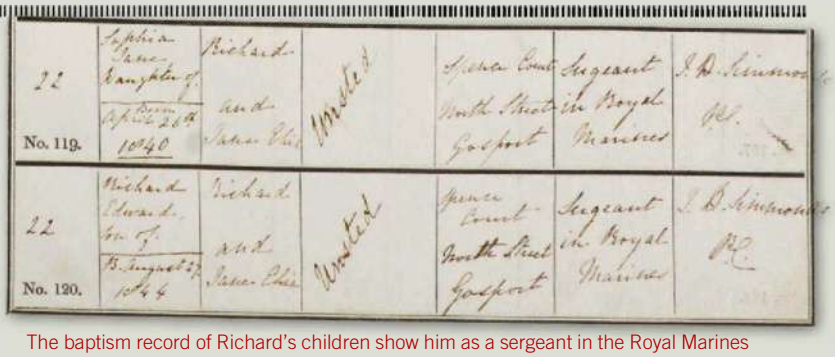
Wondering if John died aboard ship, I searched British Armed Forces and Overseas Deaths, which include deaths at sea, but to no avail. Having failed to find any trace of John overseas, I searched both General Register Office (GRO) and Scottish death registrations, again without success. Perhaps, John assumed a new identity. If so, maybe he had further children under his new name. You may find that a DNA test reveals unexpected matches.
Katherine Cobb



John is described as a 'botanical brewer' in 1901

Big Question

What did my ancestor do during his time as a Victorian Royal Marine?



The baptism record of Richard's children show him as a sergeant in the Royal Marines

Q My great great grandfather, Richard Unsted, was a colour sergeant in the Royal Marines 1837–1853. I'm trying to find out his service number and details of his service.

Born on 18 November 1813 in Wilmington, Sussex, he was enlisted on 18 April 1837 by Sergeant Edward Sutton.

He married Jane Eliza Page in July 1839 at St Mary's church, Portsmouth, and they had nine children between 1840 and 1852. He died on 19 February 1853 at RN Haslar Hospital, Gosport.

As he had at least 16 years' service, would he have qualified for long-service medals?

Hilary Hurst

HILARY HURST would love to know more about her great great grandfather's service in the Royal Marines

A The service record for a Victorian Royal Marine should be in ADM 157 series (from the The National Archives, **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) which, as far as I can tell, seems pretty comprehensive. But I can't find Richard's record when I search by surname (which is unusual), variants of surname or by his number. There were no widows' pensions at this time, so perhaps his record was later routinely destroyed, but there are records for other dead marines in ADM 157 so why not him? Because the surname's unusual, it's probably easy to mis-transcribe when indexing, so a long and patient search may yet locate it. But I suspect you've done that already.

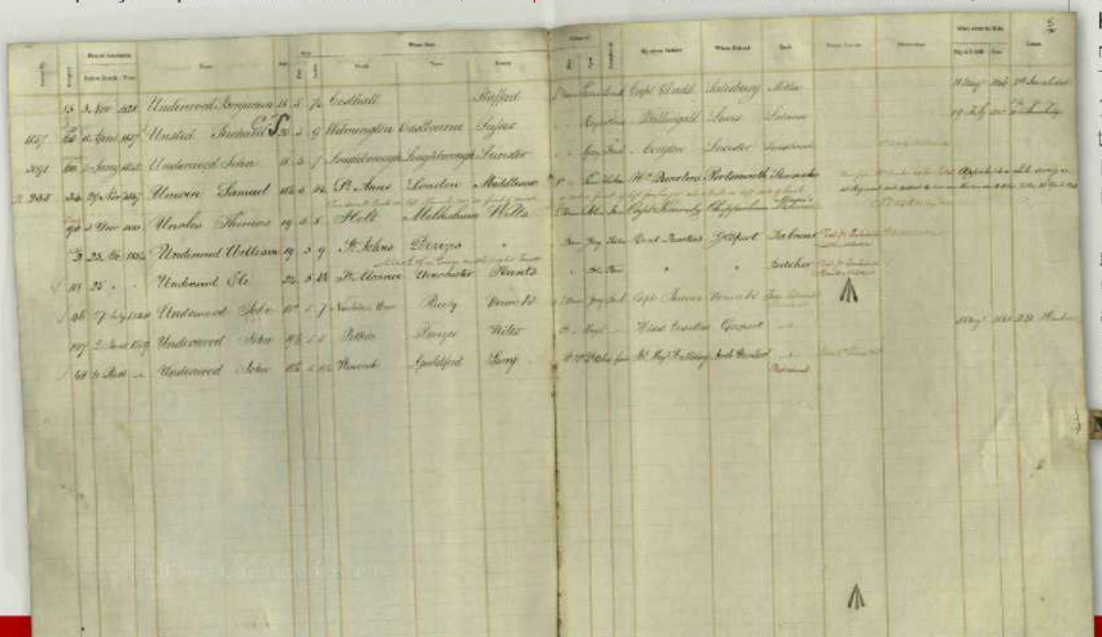
ADM 158/193/5 (available to download free from TNA if you simply place the reference into its search engine), is a Royal Marine Description Book, showing his number as 1857 and giving a physical description and confirming he was "D D" (discharged, dead) at Haslar Hospital on 19 February 1853. It appears he was enlisted into 68th Company and then transferred to 63rd Company, then 70th Company. He was certainly in 70th Company at the time of his death, as it's shown on page 22 alongside his admission page in ADM 102/332.

Richard is recorded as being 5ft 9in with hazel eyes in the Royal Marines Description Book

When it comes to details of Richard's career, there are a couple of mentions of him (there can't be two Royal Marines named Richard Unsted married to a Jane Eliza) on documents that have been indexed, but which you can't download from TNA. ADM 27/66/24 shows him sending money home to Jane Eliza while serving on HMS *Royal George* (a 120-gun square-rigged warship) in 1839 and ADM 27/77/53A from 1841/2 showing that he served on HMS *St Vincent*, another square-rigged warship during that period.

When it comes to Long Service and/or Good Conduct Medals, I'm afraid Richard fell foul of the strict regulations applying at the time. The Royal Naval Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, introduced in 1831 and applying to sailors and Royal Marines, was to be "awarded after 21 years exemplary conduct", and though this was reduced to 15 years, it wasn't until 1874. The Royal Marines Meritorious Service Medal (instituted in 1849) might have applied, except it required at least 24 years' service (with, at least, the last 14 years as a sergeant).

ADM 73/367/21 (again not online) shows that Richard's son, Richard Edward, applied to enter Greenwich Hospital School (**royalhospitalschool.org**). The papers are not dated so may cover the period after Richard Snr's death and give details of the family's circumstances at that time.



His time at sea (as a seaman, not a marine) is available to download from TNA's website under reference ADM 188/24/51967 and shows he reached the rank of Chief Petty Officer, a rank higher (equivalently) than that of his late father.

There are some highly detailed guides to tracing Royal Marines (written before many were digitised) at **tinyurl.com/Web-Archive-TNA**. Simply go to R and scroll down. Concentrate on anything relating to Portsmouth Division in which he served his entire career. Expect to also have to visit TNA at Kew.

Phil Tomaselli

Is this 2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment?

Q My husband's great grandfather, Private Frederick Cecil Ashley, was killed during the Battle of the Somme. A member of the 2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, he died on 12 October 1916. This photo supposedly shows him and his battalion just before they embarked on the final showdown.
Carol Ashley

A This is a photograph of a platoon of the Royal Engineers, probably taken in 1916 or later, possibly in France. Frederick Ashley's surviving records make no mention of the RE. His Medal Index Card (MIC) (on **ancestry.co.uk** and **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) says he did serve abroad, in the Northamptonshire Regiment, before joining 2nd Bedfordshires, as does his Medal Roll (on Ancestry).

Another Ashley family member might have served in the RE, so I've done a search at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-medal-index-cards-1914-1920/**, using "Ashley" and "Royal Engineers", and counted 52. If you know other Ashley family of the period, you might be able to identify some possibilities and research them using their MIC.

I expect Frederick enlisted first in the Northamptonshire Regiment and served in France before transferring (along with a lot of other Northants men) into 2nd Bedfords in 1916. The Medal Roll showing this is on Ancestry and should be findable via a search using his name and number (43373).

Two 1916 War Diaries for 2nd Bedfords can be downloaded free from TNA's website using references WO 95/2333/1 and WO 95/2333/2. There's a detailed account of the action in which Frederick died in the second diary. It will also give details of where they were billeted before the attack.
Phil Tomaselli

1 PLATOON

There are 38 uniformed men in the group. This is about the largest size for a platoon in 1916.

2 BADGES

The badges are consistent across the group and it's possible, when examined closely, to see a broad wreath surrounding what appears to be lettering, a crown above and a scroll below the letters. These are Royal Engineers.

3 SERGEANT'S FUSILS

Both sergeants have, above their three chevrons, a Fusil (an old fashioned grenade). Though also worn by the Royal Artillery, their cap badge is totally different.

4 OFFICER'S FUSIL

The officer (with the unit mascot?) also has a Fusil on his tunic collar, again RE.

5 TUNICS

All the uniforms look relatively smart, the tunic pockets are pleated and some caps still have cap stiffeners (see also 2), so the austerity measures of late 1914 and 1915 have ceased.

6 WOUND STRIPE

This man wears a Wound Stripe, only introduced in 1916, so this photograph was taken after that date.

The Story Of A Street

Rosemary Collins talks to a reader of the magazine who's researching the history of his road in Bedford

Victoria Cross recipient Arthur Tisdall lived at 15 Waterloo Road

The recent return of BBC Two's award-winning series *A House Through Time* has reminded us that house history can be just exciting as family history. It involves using the same skills to trace the lives of everyone who lived in a particular property.

Derek Turner has taken house history one step further by tracing the lives of everyone who lived on his street – Waterloo Road in Bedford, 20 miles north of Luton.

As he explains, he first became curious when he moved to the street in 2022, living next door to his son Mark. Derek asked him whether he had the deeds to his house, which he didn't, because the records had been accidentally burned. But Mark did have a collection of documents relating to the Bower Estate, a middle-class estate built in the town between the 1880s and 1900s that included Waterloo Road.

Researching a whole street provides otherwise unobtainable information

This led Derek to trace the street's residents up to 1939, using such records as census returns, the property-valuation returns of 1902, the 1910 Lloyd George Domesday Survey, the 1939 Register, a run of street directories and newspapers, plus some unusual sources from Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), including a marriage certificate from an Anglican church in Yokohama, Japan.

He says that he was surprised by what he learnt from analysing the records: "Almost half of the household heads were female. Many were young widows or wives. Almost half of the residents had been born, married, lived or worked in India and other British possessions in the Far East. County archivist Pamela Birch explained that what made Waterloo Road attractive to the ex-pats were affordable modern houses for their large Victorian families, and the equally affordable public schools for their teenage children, because most had married much younger wives quite late in life."

This is true of the most interesting family that Derek researched, the Tisdalls. In the 1901 census they are living at 15 Waterloo Road, which was known as Gery Street at the time. William Tisdall, the father of the family, had been born in India, the son of an Indian army major, and became a clergyman. His three eldest children were also born in India before he and his wife Marian moved with their family to Persia (now Iran), and then back to Britain. By 1901 they had eight children.

But tragedy struck when the First World War started. Their eldest son, Arthur, enlisted in the Navy and served in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. He helped rescue several injured men under heavy fire, an act of bravery for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. But he never received the medal, as he was killed in action only days later. Their second son, John, was killed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

The couple who married in Yokohama, Fred Owen Eustace and Harriett Rumble, were another family with connections to Asia. Owen, as he was known, was a merchant and the 1901 census record, which shows the couple living at 55 Gery Street, says that three of their five children were born in Japan. Sadly, their eldest son William also died at Gallipoli.

Derek has now moved on to researching neighbouring Albany Road. Among its residents was Mabel Barltrop, the founder of the early 20th-century religious movement known as the Panacea Society. He volunteers part-time at Bedford's Panacea Museum (**panaceamuseum.org**), and has begun to turn his findings into a blog post on the museum's website.

Derek says that he will continue his interest in local streets: "Researching a whole street other than just one house provides otherwise unobtainable information, and placing individuals and family in their local social context tells you more about them."

DEREK TURNER

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

Discover More

Historic England

w **historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/your-homes-history/how-to-find-out/history-of-house/**

The heritage organisation's excellent website includes detailed advice for researching the history of a house.

THE BIG PICTURE

Celebrating our ancestors caught on camera

GETTY IMAGES

TREADING THE BOARDS

Crowds gather to watch a street performance of a work by Charles Dickens, on 9 February 1938, in the yard of the George Inn, Southwark, London

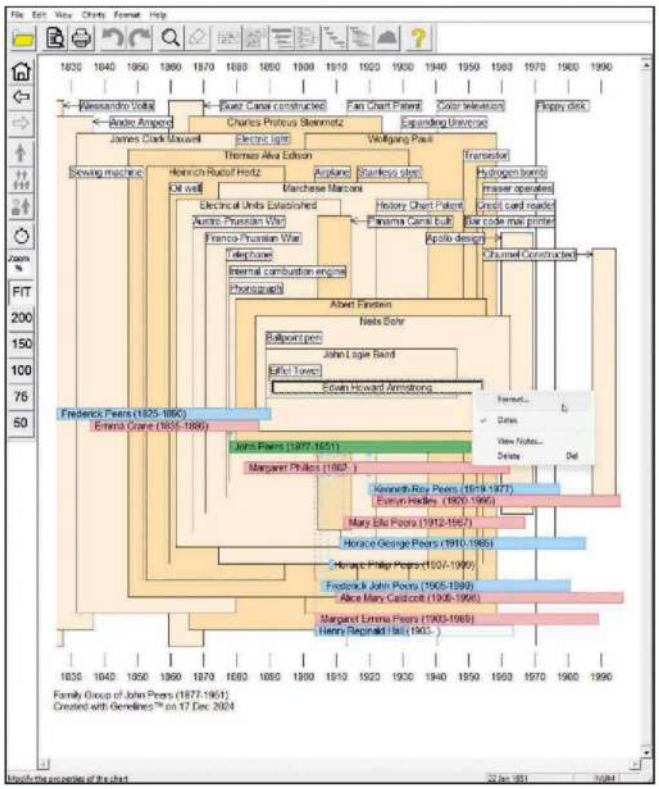
London's rich theatrical history dates back to the rein of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the monarch a notable supporter of William Shakespeare (c1564-1616). But before the first playhouse in London was built (the Red Lion, in Stepney, 1567), public productions were performed on temporary stages in inns or markets.

Here we see a performance taking place on the bed of a lorry for a stage, outside the George Inn, a public house on Borough High Street, in Southwark, on the south bank of the Thames – an area that was once the beating heart of London's theatreland. Shakespeare's Globe theatre, for example, is just a 10-minute walk away. The George, as it's now known, opened in 1540 as a coaching inn and it's possible that even Shakespeare himself performed there.

We do know for certain, however, that another literary great, Charles Dickens (1812-1870), visited the site when it was a coffee house (the original George Inn was destroyed by fire in 1676 and rebuilt a year later). It also features in his novel *Little Dorrit* – the character Maggy, speaking of Tip, says: "If he goes into the George and writes a letter…"

The Dickensian Tabard Players (**search.library.yale.edu/catalog/10604473**), who are almost certainly featured in this image, were an amateur theatrical company founded in London in 1925 by actor Ross Barrington. As its name suggests, the group performed plays adapted from Dickens' novels, and often performed outdoors at sites featured in the novels or in places that Dickens frequented during his lifetime.

Before the Second World War, the company would put on more than 40 plays a year, as well as an annual performance in the courtyard of the George, which is now a Grade I-listed building and owned and leased by The National Trust (**nationaltrust.org.uk**). It's also the only surviving galleried coaching inn in London still open as a pub, as many other examples were lost during the Second World War.



Create a timeline chart with Genelines

Nick Peers reveals how to create timelines on your Windows PC from your existing tree

If you're looking to create a timeline chart, you'll likely find existing options are a little limited. Thankfully, Progeny Genealogy's Genelines (**progenygenealogy.com**) fills that gap for Windows PCs.

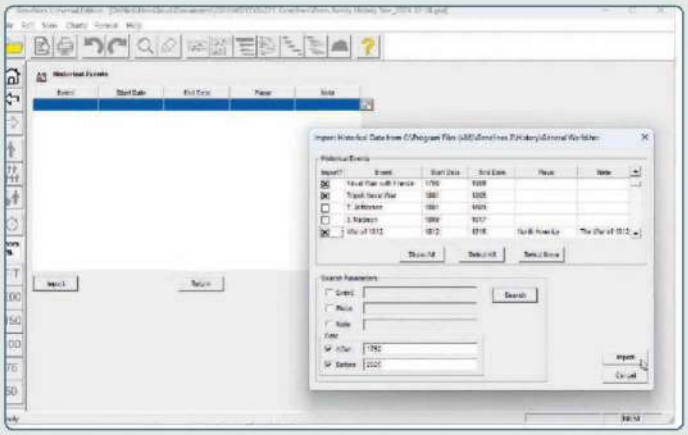
There are seven types of chart, but here we focus on the Individual Biographical Chart, which visualises an ancestor's life via their recorded events and relationships alongside key events in world history. The Comparative Biographical Chart option lets you do this for two or more specified people. There's also a Pedigree Chart for viewing a person alongside their immediate family, and a Direct Line variation that links them to a specified descendant. Full Descendants displays the timeline of a specified person and all their descendants via individually coloured branches. Finally, a Family Chart displays timelines for a person, their spouse(s) and children, and a Fan Chart provides a neat timeline twist on the traditional fan chart.

You can download a 15-day demo version from **progenygenealogy.com** – you can't export or print any charts, but otherwise it's fully functional. Purchase the full version for £20.95 from S&N Genealogy Supplies (**genealogysupplies.com**).

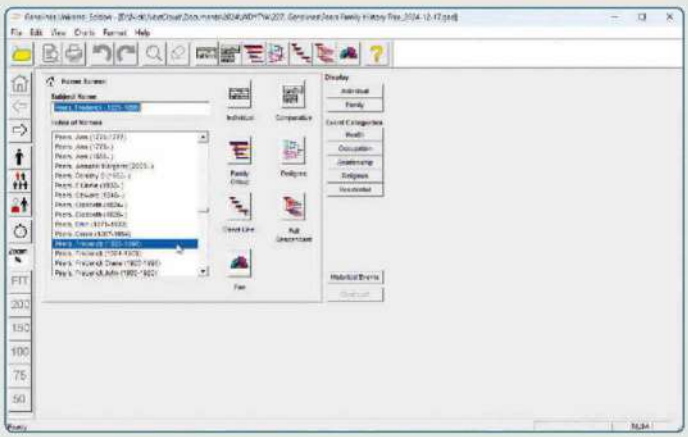
TOP TIP!

Genelines offers a Family Tree Maker 2019 plugin, but it doesn't currently work. Instead, export your tree from FTM as a GEDCOM file.

1 Prep Family Tree Genelines can import files directly from several older apps, including Legacy (**legacyfamilytree.com**), but in most cases, you'll need to save your tree in GEDCOM format from your current program. Look for 'Export' option under 'File menu'. Once done, open 'Genelines' and choose 'File > Open' to import the file.

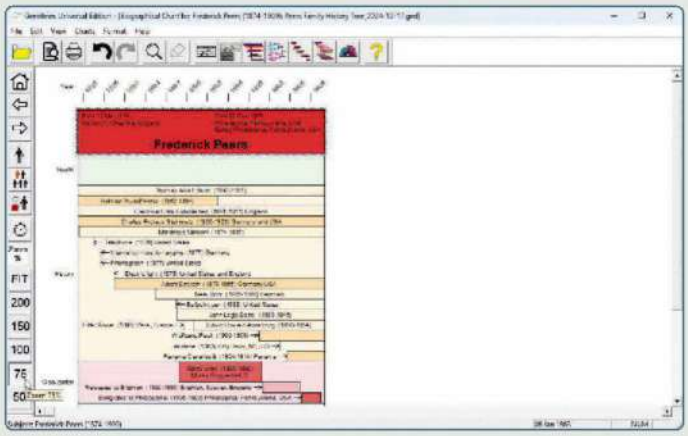


2 Add Historical Events To include world events in your timelines, click 'Historical Events' on the main screen followed by 'Import'. Three files offer world (primarily US), cultural and technological events. You can import all or just a selection of events from each list, plus type in your own events. Click 'Return' when done.

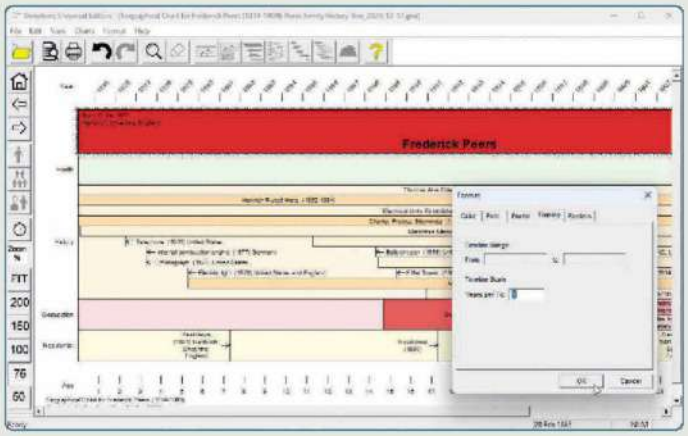


3 Select Individual And Events Now select the person you want to feature in your first chart – start typing their name into the 'Subject Name' box to filter the list. Once selected, click each 'Event' category on the right to see what information exists for that person in your GEDCOM file. You can manually add your own events here.

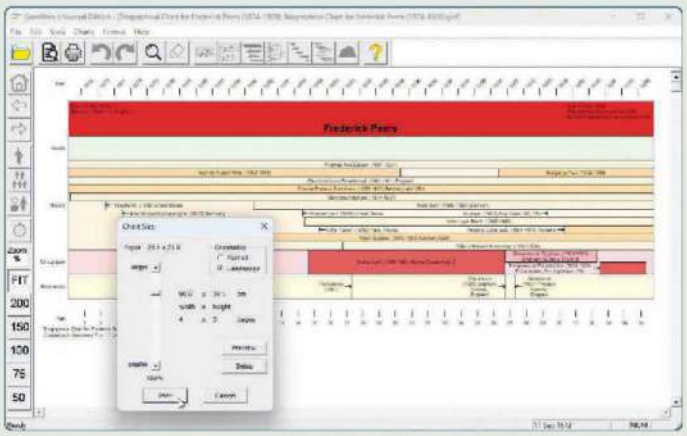
4 Choose Chart Let's start by generating an Individual Biographical Chart – click the button next to your selected ancestor. Click each event category you wish to include so it's highlighted, then click 'Events' to choose which events to display and which to exclude (clear the X next to unwanted events). Click 'OK'.



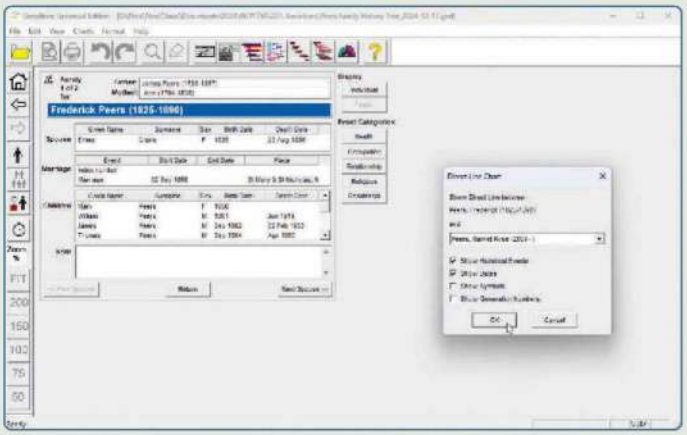
5 View Chart Tick both 'Show Dates?' and 'Show Description?' boxes before clicking 'OK' again to display your timeline. Use the buttons under 'Zoom %' on the left to adopt a more comfortable view (click 'FIT' to fit it inside the window) or use the scrollbars to move around the chart.



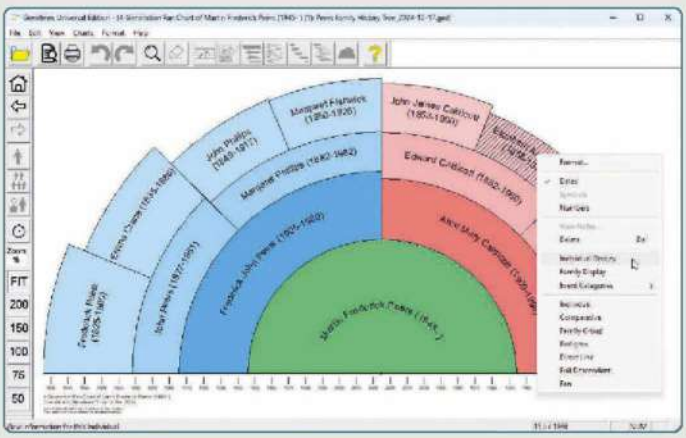
6 Make Changes Experiment with tweaking the chart: click the name at the top to access tools for adding new events, switching to another person or family, or right-click on an individual event to reformat it or simply remove it from the chart. Made a mistake? Simply press 'Ctrl + Z' to undo the last change.



7 Print Or Share Click 'File > Save' periodically to save your chart within the program. When you're happy with it, choose 'File > Publish > Genelines Chart File' to save it to your hard drive as a file you can reimport later if you wish. You can also print or export the file to PDF format via 'File > Print'.



8 Switch Chart Type Try a different chart by clicking its button at the top. If prompted, click 'Yes' to preserve your edits from the previous step, then choose your parameters for the new chart (such as selecting another individual) before clicking 'OK' to display it. Click 'Home' to start from scratch with a new person.



9 Create A Timeline Fan Chart The fan chart option creates a timeline beneath the chart in years stretching back from the life of the selected ancestor. Each ancestor in turn is then positioned on the chart according to when they were born, making it easy to compare each ancestor's birth dates with their contemporaries.

Part of a 1957 magazine advert that told readers they could 'Make sure of a good meal with a traditional plate of Fish & Chips'

THE BIRTH OF THE BRITISH CHIPPY

Daniel Gray explores the 150-year history of our national dish – fish and chips

It's a thoroughly British mystery: which enlightened genius first paired battered fish with chips? Who of three candidates – a Lancastrian millworker, a 17-year-old girl from Bradford and a London teenager – conjured up the dish that came to be a treasured symbol of our national identity?

The Lancastrian millworker was John Lees from Mossley, 10 miles north east of Manchester. One day in 1863, while pottering around the nearby town of Oldham, Lees had stumbled upon a market stall selling the most marvellous snack: hot, succulent chipped slices of fried potato. They were the work of a tripe dresser named Mr Dyson, and today a blue plaque at Tommyfield Market in Oldham commemorates the site as the "home of the first British fried chip… around 1860".

Lees rushed back to Mossley, where besides mill duties he ran the Enterprise Supper Bar, a shack known for its delicacy of pea soup with pigs' trotters. Following his Oldham epiphany, Lees copied Dyson's recipe and added 'Chipped Potatoes in the French and American Style' to the Enterprise menu. Soon afterwards, they were paired with fried fish. Local lore holds that Lees hit upon the combination before anyone else; still today, arrivals at Mossley railway station are greeted by a mural celebrating his accomplishment.

Fledgling Genius' Concoction

At around the same time, young Clara Duce of Lumb Lane in Bradford was working in the family grocery shop. The store was opposite a woollen mill and her plan was to introduce a sideline that would entice hungry workers as they exited the factory gates. What inspired Duce to lure them with fried fish and chips, of all blends, is not known. It is clear, however, that she had a gift for it – having moved back to her native Hertfordshire, over the following decades she and her family established a chain of chippies across the county. Indeed, Duces still run chip shops in the South-East now.

Our third protagonist was even younger than Clara when he married fish to chips, again in the early 1860s. Londoner Joseph Malin was the son of Jewish immigrants who traipsed East End streets peddling hot chipped potatoes. One fateful ▶

day when he was 13 or 14, Joseph purchased a battered fish from another trader and brought it home to 78 Cleveland Way, Bethnal Green. There, he paired this golden delight with a portion of Malin chips and in doing so – according to this version of the yarn – birthed a delicacy that would change the nation.

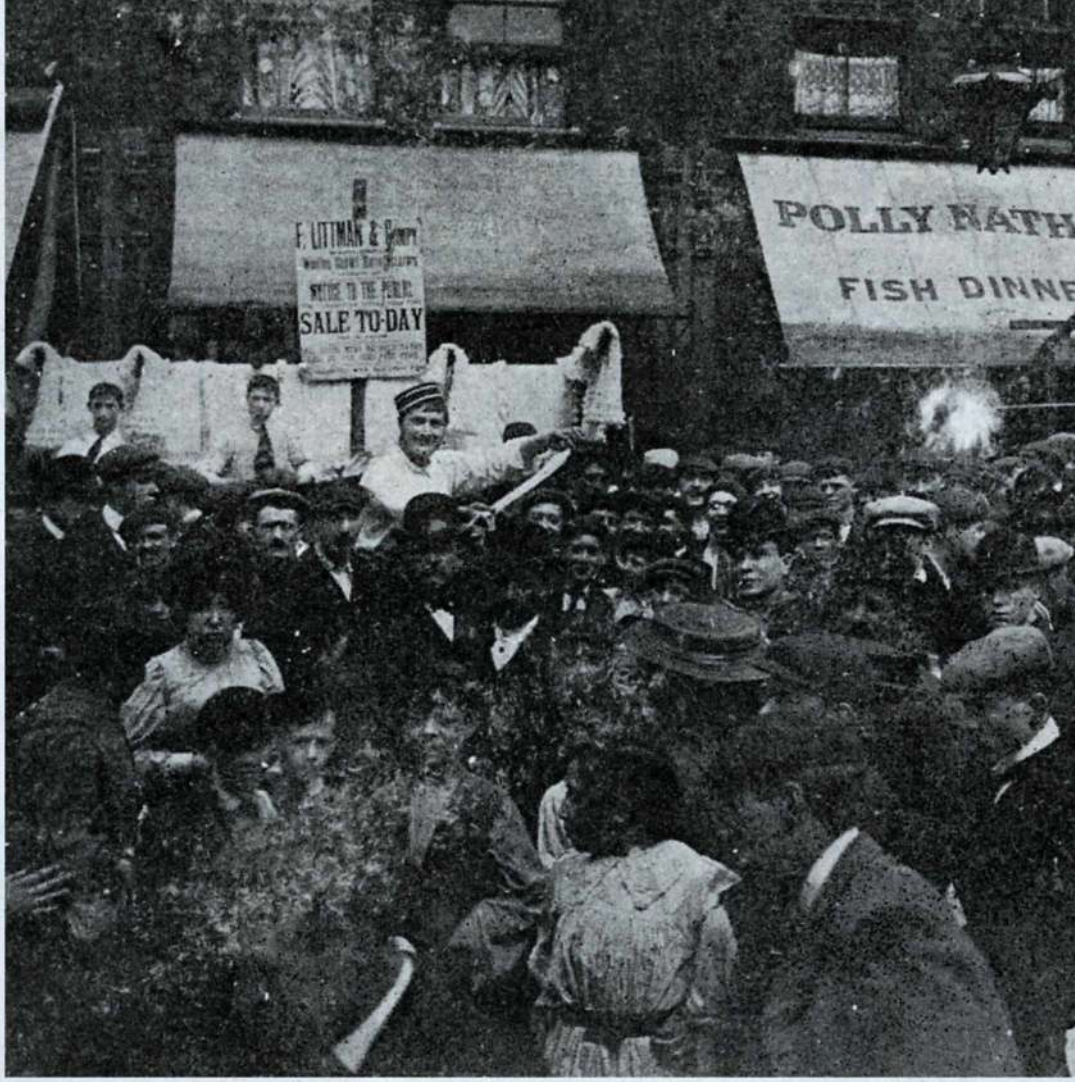
Word of the fledgling genius's concoction spread. Hurriedly, 78 Cleveland Way was transformed into what has often been referred to as Britain's first chippy.

"1863! 1863!"

This London claim has often been the most prominent one, though not without dispute. Some have griped that Malin chips were circular and so did not count. When at an awards luncheon in 1968 the National Federation of Fish Friers proclaimed the still-existent Malin family shop to be 'The World's Oldest Fish and Chip Business,' a Lancastrian rebel heckled throughout the ceremony. He bawled that John Lees was Britain's first and oldest, crying "1863! 1863!"

It is difficult to determine whether Lees, Duce or Malin is our chip shop idol; perhaps there should be statues in Mossley, Bradford *and* Bethnal Green. In all three cases, dates – though always in the early 1860s – are sketchy or sources contradictory and details scarce. Folklore trumps facts. The mystery, then, is unsolved, a tease.

We know that one elementary problem with working-class history is that so little of it is written down; for fish and chip history that issue is even more pronounced. Those frying were simply too immersed to record their activities.



Petticoat Lane Market, c. 1909, showing Polly Nathan's Fish Shop

A Frontier Of Women's Lib

Whichever origin story we choose, there are a number of historical certainties that ring true within all three. They present us with a solid base from which to understand the early decades of the fish and chip trade.

Lees, Duce and Malin were all working-class people serving industrial communities. From their earliest days, fish and chip shops offered – sometimes for less than a penny – a tasty and, crucially, filling meal. It was one that appealed greatly to the millworker or docker famished after a day's toil. Some families dined from their local chippy two or three times a week. It meant a rare break for women, expected to run family, home and, in many cases, work, too.

The rapidity with which the Lees, Duce and Malin families adapted to sell fish and chips was also typical. Here was a business that could be simply and cheaply established with basic frying equipment and stock. Many early chippies were started from hastily

Albert Smith 1919-1992 & Arthur Jefferson 1916-1997

The story of two footballers turned fish fryers

Visiting the fish and chip shop has long been a ritual for football fans on their way to or from a match. Yet there are also strong historical links between those who play the game and our national dish. With most British footballers coming from working-class stock, it was a trade they knew well; further, a fish and chip shop represented an investment opportunity their often-meagre earnings could stretch to. Among them were Albert 'Smudger' Smith and Arthur Jefferson of Queen's Park Rangers (QPR).

L-R: Arthur Jefferson & Albert Smith in their chippy, 1949

The two met when inside forward Smith signed for QPR in 1939. Yorkshireman Jefferson – a full-back – had joined in 1936 and would go on to play 368 games for the west London club. Soon after signing, Smith was called up to serve in the Second World War and later awarded a British Empire Medal for bravery while fighting in Italy.

Back home from 1941, he became a regular starter for QPR and a friendship with teammate Jefferson blossomed. Soon, the two had gone into business together with a fish and chip shop on Melina Road – just down the road from QPR's Loftus Road abode.

GETTY IMAGES

converted front rooms in terraced houses, a trend which lasted for a century at least.

Further, Duce's presence as a woman running her own fish and chip outlets was representative of another trend. Here was a new trade within which women cultivated a meritocracy; the feat of saving up wages while employed in someone else's shop to later open one's own was impressively common. From both sides of the counter fish and chips were an unlikely frontier of women's liberation.

That Joseph Malin was the son of Jewish immigrants (from Eastern Europe) was another representative principle of the early trade. As Claudia Roden detailed in her *Book of Jewish Food*, it was 16th-century Jewish immigrants to London who first fried battered fish on these shores. With chipped potatoes most likely a French or Belgian import, our national dish has resolutely foreign origins.

An Offensive Trade

The critical role of immigrants to the industry's growth and life did not stop there. Many Jewish families like the Malins ran chip shops in London and beyond. They were followed by arrivals from various countries who formed the industry's backbone, whether Italians in Scotland and Wales, Cypriots across the south of England or Chinese chippy owners in Lancashire and on Merseyside.

Naturally, an industry run by and for working-class (and immigrant) people attracted scepticism and snobbery from the middle and ruling classes. To them, this was paupers' food served from grimy hovels. Detractors did, however, have a point where the question of hygiene was concerned. Few early chippies had ventilation systems, meaning the scent of tallow fats deployed for frying lingered. It could make for a dingy, almost sickening atmosphere that wafted out into the street. Health inspectors at an 1891 court hearing of a case against a chip shop in Middlesbrough compared the stench to "rancid candles"; 20 years later in nearby County Durham, a Dr Trotter claimed that "the grease, and tallow admixtures frequently employed in cooking caused evil results".

By the Edwardian era, the UK government deemed fish and chip shops to be a "nuisance"; by law, theirs was now defined as an Offensive Trade. That classification brought tougher restrictions on how, where and when chippies operated. It also further stigmatised them in the eyes of wealthier members of society.

Yet chippies were now embedded in their communities. They quickly became cherished social hubs fit for gathering and gossiping from daytime to pub closing hour. Operating the shops' cumbersome coal frying ranges were white-coated proprietors and their staff, all of them working laborious shifts which began with early morning potato peeling and fish filleting.

A BEACON OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

'Chatchip' (William Loftus), an Edwardian newspaper columnist who wrote only of the fish and chip trade, described a typical frier: "He used to manipulate the fires with a long-handled shovel and to all appearances gave one the impression he was firing up a factory boiler. While the great panful of chipped potatoes was being cooked he would, in the intervals between 'firing up' and 'stirring up' the contents of the pan, stand behind the counter with his greasy hands in his ▶

A travelling fish and chip cart provides sustenance for locals near Selkirk, Scotland, 1937

GETTY IMAGES

A street vendor sells fish and chips to a group of young lads, 1931

pockets, chewing away at a great quid of tobacco."

Despite sneers from those on high and that 'Offensive' status, fish and chips soon began their journey to universal popularity and becoming a beacon of national identity. New frying ranges diluted odours and chip shops now exhaled the seductive aromas that they do today. The dramatic spread of railways and technological advances in trawler fishing expanded the chippy's reach to every corner of the land – by the 1920s, Britain was home to 35,000 shops.

Their increasingly crucial status was underlined during wartime. In the First World War, fish and chips kept munitions workers sated; from 1940, chip shops were no longer deemed an Offensive Trade and exempted from rationing. During both conflicts, there existed a feeling that chippies were a vital cog in national morale. Indeed after the First World War, *The Frier* – newsletter of the Northern Counties Federation of Fish Friers – even claimed that fish suppers had played a central part in 'stemming revolution.' Unlike the peasants and proletariats of Russia, went their logic, because of chippy teas the British working-class had never been hungry enough to rebel.

DELICIOUS SIMPLICITY

One reason Britain became besotted with fish and chips was the dish's delicious simplicity and satisfying consistency. The basics have remained startlingly similar to those in the era of Lees, Duce and Malin, although there have been tweaks and trends along the way. Plaice was initially the fish stock most commonly fried, soon replaced by dominant cod and haddock. Frying in crude, dirty tallow gave way to beef dripping and increasingly vegetable oil. Chippies broadened their menus to include sausages and other delicacies, many available only in specific areas, for example orange chips in the West Midlands or slapped potato patties in Hull.

Given that this industry has over its 150-year history employed so many people, it's likely that somewhere along the line you'll have a chip shop connection. If nothing else, pondering such a link feels like a good excuse for a delightful portion of fish and chips.

DANIEL GRAY
is a writer and presenter. His books include *Food of the Cods: How Fish & Chips Made Britain.*

RESOURCES

Take your research further

BOOKS

Food of the Cods: How Fish & Chips Made Britain
Daniel Gray
Harper North, 2023
Part-travelogue and part-social history, Gray's book tells the story of Britain's fish and chips obsession.

Fish & Chips & the British Working Class, 1870–1940
John K. Walton
Leicester University Press, 1992
Masterly account of fish and chips' rise and establishment, with strong focus on working-class life.

ARCHIVE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FISH FRIERS
a **New Federation House, 4 Greenwood Mount, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS6 4LQ**
t 0113 230 7044
e *mail@nfff.co.uk*
w **nfff.co.uk**
As well as being a fantastic source of information, the NFFF have trade newsletters going back almost 100 years.

WEBSITE

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
In an under-documented history, local newspapers in particular are vital for tracing the narrative and detail of the fish and chip trade.

TRADE DIRECTORY

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
w **specialcollections.le.ac.uk**
Trade directories are indispensable for locating past fish and chip businesses.

VIDEO

CHIP CRISIS HITS WALES
w **tinyurl.com/YouTube-chip-crisis**
Outstanding 1962 BBC report in which playwright Gwyn Thomas poetically details a grave lack of chips in the Valleys.

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MERCHANDISE

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- Bedfordshire kin

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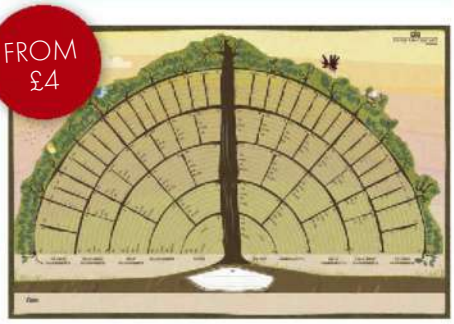

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'I've Solved The Mystery Behind A Napoleonic Medal'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

A family heirloom from the 19th century intrigued Kathy McNeill and led her on the trail of a soldier who fought during Napoleonic times. She tells her story to **Gail Dixon**

My brother John inherited an old medal in 1961 which bore the inscription 'Mark Ewing' on its edge. The medal was quite a mystery – all we knew was that it had been passed down through my dad's Ewen family.

Years later, John showed the medal to an expert who said it was a Napoleonic War Military General Service medal. It was rare because it had a battle clasp for Martinique in the West Indies – most of the Napoleonic Wars were fought in Europe and the majority of medals had more than one clasp. The medal was all I had to work on at that point. So who was Mark Ewing and how could I trace his life and career?

KATHY MCNEILL lives near Wellington on New Zealand's North Island. She's been researching her family tree for almost 40 years

My Eureka Moment

My paternal great grandparents were Ann and George Ewen, who lived in Birtley, County Durham (now Tyne and Wear), where he worked as a coal miner. Census returns revealed that Ann and George had been born in Gaywood, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, so presumably they moved north to find work. After I'd discovered as much as possible about the family in Birtley, I turned my attention to Norfolk.

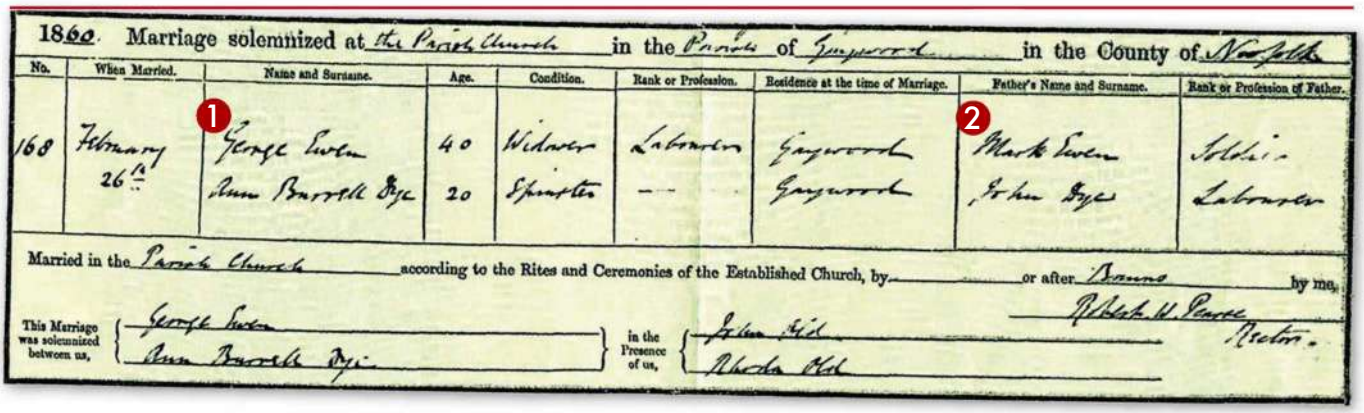
In the 1841 census, George lived in Gaywood with his parents Alice and Mark Ewen, who was an agricultural labourer. George married twice: first in 1841 to Ann Appleton, who died of heart disease; and in 1860 to my great grandmother Ann Burrell Dye.

Around 25 years ago, I ordered George Ewen's two marriage certificates. The first recorded his father as Mark Ewen, farmer. The second was more interesting – it gave George's father as 'Mark Ewen, soldier'. Eureka! It looked as though I'd found the 'Mark of the medal'. The spelling of his surname varied, but that often happened in the past.

I was keen to discover more about my great great grandfather Mark. In the 1851 census, he gave his age as 90 and birthplace as 'Fransham', Norfolk. I searched for a baptism record and found a transcription of one for Mark Ewin who was baptised at Great Fransham, near Kings Lynn, in 1767. I asked a local researcher, Joanne Penn, to get a copy of

Marriage Certificate, 1860

This record helped Kathy trace an ancestor who was a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars



1860. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Gaywood in the County of Norfolk

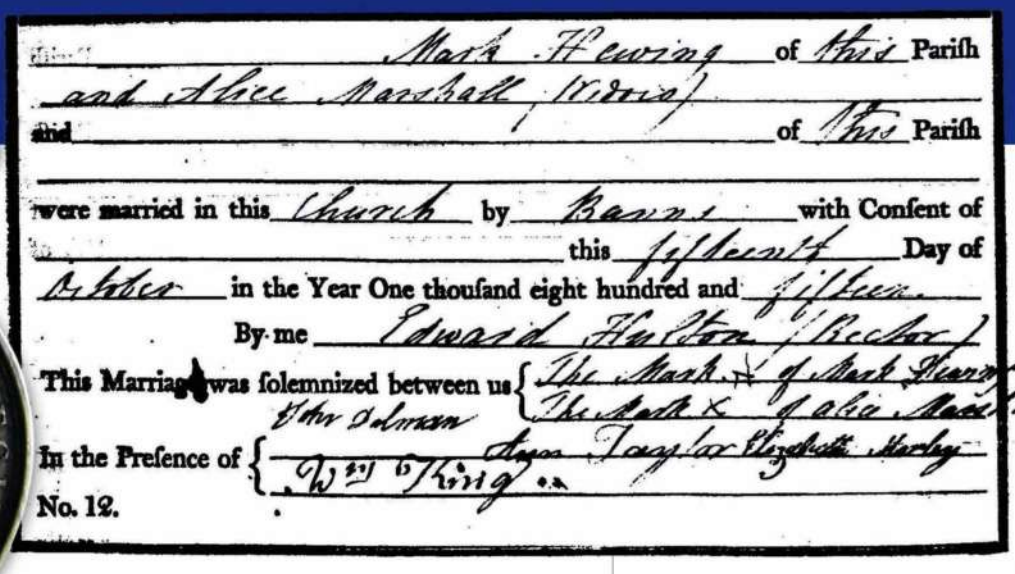
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
168	February 26th	1 George Ewen	40	Widower	Labourer	Gaywood	2 Mark Ewen	Soldier
		Ann Burrell Dye	20	Spinster	—	Gaywood	John Dye	Labourer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by ____ or after Banns by me, Robert H. Pearce Rector.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Ewen, Ann Burrell Dye. in the Presence of us, John Dye, Rhoda Dye.

1 THE SECOND MARRIAGE
George Ewen was Kathy's great grandfather. This was his second marriage certificate.

2 THE SOLDIER
His father's details were 'Mark Ewen, soldier', which corresponded with a very similar name on a 19th century service medal passed down through the family.


Mark Ewing of this Parish
and Alice Marshall (Widow)
of this Parish
were married in this Church by Banns with Consent of
this fifteenth Day of
October in the Year One thousand eight hundred and fifteen.
By me Edward Hulton (Rector)
This Marriage was solemnized between us The Mark X of Mark Ewing
The Mark X of Alice Marshall
In the Presence of Thos Johnson
Wm King
Ann Taylor Elizabeth Hardy
No. 12.

Left: The Napoleonic War Military General Service medal, engraved with the name Mark Ewing; Above: Kathy's great great grandparents Mark and Alice's marriage certificate, dated 1815

the record from Great Fransham parish register for me.

Another eureka moment followed when I discovered that Mark's service record was held at The National Archives (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**) and I was able to get a copy posted to me. The handwriting was hard to decipher, but I did learn important information about his career.

The record stated that Mark enlisted in the British Army at the age of 26, however his real age was 17. He was 5ft 9in tall, with brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion. Mark initially served as a private with the 4th (The King's Own) Regiment of Foot from 1784 to 1790. During his career, he would have worn the distinctive red coat of British soldiers.

In 1790, Mark joined the 7th Regiment of Foot (Royal Fusiliers) and remained with it for 21 years. He spent long periods in Canada on garrison duty and served in the West Indies from 1803 to 1809.

My Breakthrough

Mark earned his medal clasp in 1809 when the 7th Regiment of Foot was sent into battle on the French island of Martinique. After landing on the East coast, the fusiliers marched inland to join other regiments and attack French positions.

Mark would have engaged in skirmishes with enemy forces, armed with a rifle or musket. During the intense fighting, 84 British soldiers died and 334 were wounded.

Following a siege, British forces took the key stronghold of Fort Desaix and the island capitulated. The capture of Martinique was a huge blow to France's power in the Caribbean and helped to protect British trade with the West Indies.

The redcoats seized three Eagle Standards from the French, which was highly symbolic and the equivalent of taking the British Colours. The 7th Regiment of Foot, as a reward for its bravery, was allowed to keep one of the Eagles which is displayed in London's Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (fusiliermuseumlondon.org).

In 1809, the 7th Regiment of Foot was sent to Spain and Portugal where they engaged in major battles in the Peninsular War. Mark's medal only had one clasp on it so I assumed that he may have been ill or wounded following service in Martinique. By late 1811, he was transferred to the 3rd Royal Veteran Battalion, which had light duties.

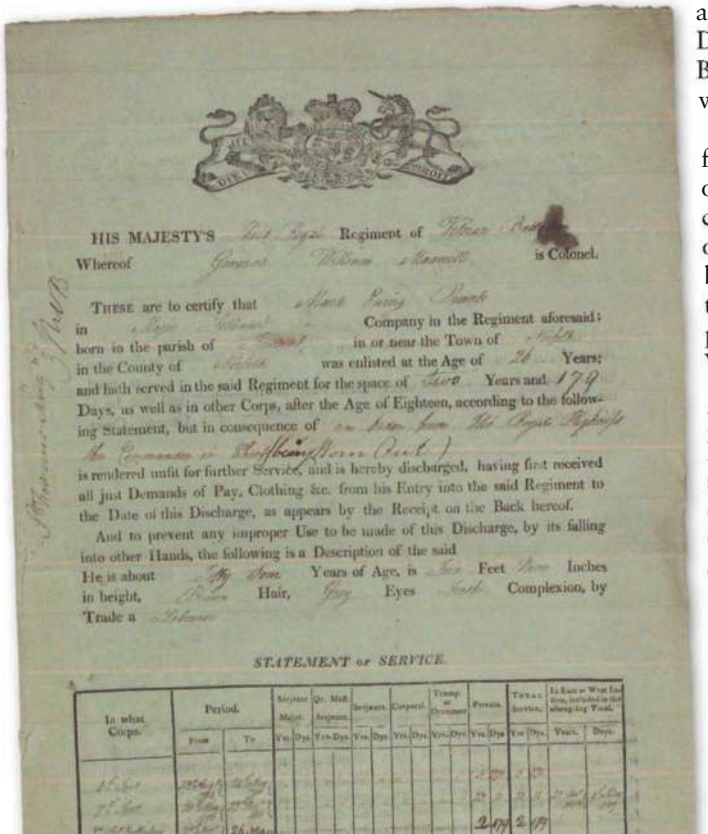
Mark served for almost 30 years before being discharged in 1814 because he was 'worn out'. He became a Chelsea out-pensioner and returned to Norfolk where he married widow Alice Marshall in Gaywood. They had three children – Elizabeth, Robert and my great grandfather George.

Exploring Mark Ewen's life has been fascinating. He must have had an adventurous spirit to switch from rural life to travelling the world as a British redcoat.

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*


HIS MAJESTY'S Regiment of Foot Guards
Whereof is Colonel.

THESE are to certify that Mark Ewing Private
in Company in the Regiment aforesaid;
born in the parish of in or near the Town of
in the County of was enlisted at the Age of 26 Years;
and hath served in the said Regiment for the space of Two Years and 179
Days, as well as in other Corps, after the Age of Eighteen, according to the following Statement, but in consequence of
is rendered unfit for further Service, and is hereby discharged, having first received all just Demands of Pay, Clothing &c. from his Entry into the said Regiment to the Date of this Discharge, as appears by the Receipt on the Back hereof.

And to prevent any improper Use to be made of this Discharge, by its falling into other Hands, the following is a Description of the said
He is about Years of Age, is Feet Inches
in height, Hair, Eyes Complexion, by
Trade a

STATEMENT of SERVICE.

Mark Ewen's (it states Ewing) service record from The National Archives

Reader Tips

Kathy shares her top three pieces of research advice

- Read certificates and census returns carefully – they can have useful clues.
- Always check information given by relatives or found in online family trees.
- It may be worth paying a local researcher to track down records unavailable online.

Around Britain

East Riding

A new online hub has made it easier than ever to search the East Riding of Yorkshire's archives, says **Jonathan Scott**

Flamborough Head Lighthouse overlooks Selwick's Bay on the East Riding coastline

Although we think of archives as rather static things, in reality they're always changing. One recent addition to the East Riding Archives' collections in the market town of Beverley is a modest-looking account book which revealed the forgotten history of a children's knitting school in the seaside town of Bridlington.

The school was established in 1670 by an elderly merchant named William Bower – a fact recorded in his elaborately carved gravestone still visible in the town's priory church. Poor children between six and 12 were "instructed in carding, spinning and knitting for at least two and no more than five years" in a cottage on Church Green. The first master was Rowland Milner, a knitter by trade, but by the start of the 19th century the children were taught by a succession of female teachers. According to the book, which covers the final 90 years of the school's existence, they were originally paid for what they produced, which in the 1780s and 1790s could be as little as 5d a week. By 1825 the weekly pay was fixed at 1s, reduced to 10d for the final 30 years before its closure in the 1870s.

The archive closed for refurbishment in September 2023, and we caught up with archivist Hannah Stamp just as it was reopening to the public in mid December. Renamed the

1958 railway poster to promote Bridlington

GETTY IMAGES

Free Online Records

This month's fantastic selection includes registers of deeds, trade directories, fishing ship crew lists, parish registers and oral history recordings

Deeds
w **registerofdeeds.org.uk**

Here you can search for names hidden in Yorkshire's various registers of deeds. There's not much information given, but the reference should help you find the original documents.

Historical Directories
w **specialcollections.le.ac.uk**

There are numerous trade directories available from the University of Leicester's Special Collections Online. These include a General Directory of Kingston-upon-Hull and York from 1851.

Hull Fishing Crews
w **catalogue.hullhistorycentre.org.uk/advanced**

Hull History Centre has some 25,500 records of crew lists for fishing ships sailing out of Hull between the years 1884 and 1914. Simply enter 'CDPF' into the reference field.

FamilySearch
w **familysearch.org/search/collection/4439317**

Parish registers from across the East Riding. To see original images you'll need to access the site at a FamilySearch centre or affiliate library.

East Riding Digital Archive
w **eastriding.access.preservica.com**

Explore some of the 'born digital' collections, as well as newly digitised oral history recordings.

Internet Archives
w **archive.org/search?query=Yorkshire+parish+registers**

Try your luck in this large collection of digitised volumes of transcribed parish registers from across Yorkshire.

Champney Treasure House after local businessman John Edward Champney, who helped fund the original library and gallery in the early 20th century, the £3.3 million scheme has reshaped the museum and archives, and is now also home to the register office and tourist information (returning researchers will probably be struck by new carpets, freshly painted walls and a very green enquiries desk). Staff kicked off this new era with an exhibition on Travellers and Settlers, exploring the history of ethnic diversity, migration and settlement in the East Riding (**eastridingculture.co.uk/whats-on/travellers-and-settlers-project/**), which will be touring the county in 2025.

New Online Hub

Since we last visited this part of Yorkshire they've launched a new online hub where you can hunt through 'born digital' holdings (**eastriding.access.preservica.com**). Recent additions include an oral history project that was originally conducted to coincide with the redevelopment of Grade II listed Skidby Mill in 2000. The project left behind a repository of more than 60 interviews with residents, recalling life and work in the countryside during the first half of the 20th century, all recorded on minidiscs and cassettes. The collection includes personal narratives from former hired lads, domestic servants, farmers and windmill workers, and covers events from Martinmas hiring fairs, where rural workers would gather to secure work for the coming year, to the bombing of RAF Driffield.

The archive is home to parish records for the entire East Riding Archdeaconry

Long before you think about knitting schools, hired lads or indeed any occupational sources, you will be after census and parish material. The archive is home to parish records for the entire East Riding Archdeaconry, which includes several places outside the East Riding, such as Scarborough. At the same time records for many western parishes in East Riding form part of the Diocese of York collections, which are held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives in York (**york.ac.uk/borthwick/**). Here you'll also find archives relating to the Society of Friends (Quakers), Methodist, Catholic, Apostolic, Unitarian, Congregationalist and United Reformed churches.

Researching parish records anywhere in Yorkshire is a much simpler prospect than it was a few generations back. Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) dominates this part of the county thanks to an agreement with a consortium of six Yorkshire archives, alongside data provided by family history groups. The Yorkshire Collection launched with parish records, but now includes Bishop's Transcripts, cemetery records, cremations and Memorial Inscriptions.

Another key research hub for this part of the world is Hull History Centre (**hullhistorycentre.** ▶

GETTY IMAGES

The Grade II-listed Skidby Mill was redeveloped in 2000

org.uk/home.aspx). One notable rarity is a document from 1537 in which Henry VIII pardons people involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace – a popular rising against his break with the Roman Catholic Church – which also includes a list of those who were not pardoned.

Maritime Records

The centre has all sorts of material for anyone researching maritime workers. These include some 25,500 records of fishing crew lists for ships between the years 1884 and 1914, plus records of local trawler firms like Thomas Hamling or the Hellyer Brothers. Quarter sessions records also contain a wealth of personal information on both victims and witnesses of crimes back to 1741. And you can find some useful research guides to all these topics at **hullhistorycentre.org.uk/research/research-guides/research.aspx**. (Hull, too, is in the midst of a multi-million pound redevelopment, which should see the Maritime Museum reopen in 2026.)

Cause Papers

There's all sorts of free material available for remote research. The Borthwick Institute, for example, offers access to the Cause Papers Database (**dhi.ac.uk/causepapers**), a searchable catalogue of more than 14,000 cause papers – documents relating to cases heard between 1300 and 1858 in the church courts of the diocese of York. Thanks to a project helmed by the Wellcome Trust, the Institute has also catalogued the archive of the Retreat, "one of the most important institutions in the care and treatment of mental health patients" founded by the Society of Friends in 1796. Although based outside the East Riding, patients came to the Retreat from all over Yorkshire and further afield, and you can explore the digitised documents via **borthcat.york.ac.uk/index.php/ret**.

Another useful resource if you've managed to trace your family back to the 17th century is Hearth Tax Digital (**gams.uni-graz.at/context:htx**). This tax was levied in England and Wales from 1662 until 1689, and was based on the number of fireplaces in each house. The site currently has data on around 320,000 households from across England, with more being added all the time. It is hoped that by the end of 2025 all three ridings of Yorkshire, as well as documents for the City of York, will be live.

TOP TIP!

The East Riding Register of Deeds was established in 1708 and contains more than a million deeds from East Riding and Hull up to April 1974. Find out more at: **tinyurl.com/east-riding-deeds-register**

LOCAL INDUSTRY

Tanning Leather tanning was once an important industry in Yorkshire

Workers at Hodgson's Tannery in Flemingate, taken in 1954

In 1851 Beverley was home to six tanning firms, the largest being William Hodgson, George Cussons and George Catterson. By 1890 Hodgson's was employing 450 men at the tannery in Flemingate. A keyword search turns up lots of relevant holdings in the East Riding archive catalogue, and there are some oral history recordings via **eastriding.access.preservica.com/?s=tannery**.

GETTY IMAGES

EAST RIDING DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

East Riding Archives

a **Champney Treasure House, Champney Road, Beverley HU17 9BA**
t 01482 392790
e *archives.service@eastriding.gov.uk*
w **eastridingarchives.co.uk**

The archive service has records for East Riding archdeaconry, which includes Hull and Scarborough, as well as parts of modern North Yorkshire that were formerly in the East Riding. Other collections here include nonconformist material, court records and coroners' inquests, plus records relating to poor law, police, schools, businesses, cemeteries, electoral registers, military, maps and newspapers.

Borthwick Institute for Archives

a **University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD**
t 01904 321166
e *borthwick-institute@york.ac.uk*
w **york.ac.uk/borthwick/**

Alongside probate material from all over Yorkshire, the institute holds Methodist records for the York Circuit, plus Archdeaconry of York parish registers – many of which fall within the East Riding local authority boundary.

Hull History Centre

a **Worship Street, Hull HU2 8BG**
t 01482 317500
e *hullhistorycentre@hullcc.gov.uk*
w **hullhistorycentre.org.uk**

The centre holds nonconformist, local authority and business records, as well as important maritime collections. The website includes useful research guides covering muster rolls, school records and civil defence personnel.

North Yorkshire County Record Office

a **Malpas Road, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 8TB**
t 01609 777585
e *archives@northyorks.gov.uk*
w **northyorks.gov.uk/leisure-tourism-and-culture/county-record-office**

Looks after North Riding school records, quarter sessions records, electoral registers, poor law material and more.

West Yorkshire Joint Services

a **Nepshaw Lane South, Morley LS27 7JQ**
t 01924 305980
e *archives@wyjs.org.uk*
w **wyjs.org.uk/archive-service/**

Here you can find out about the service's five district offices. Wakefield holds the West Riding Registry of Deeds made up of 12,763 volumes containing 7million extracts of property transactions from 1704 to 1970.

York Explore Library and Archive

a **Library Square, York YO1 7DS**
t 01904 552800
e *archives@exploreyork.org.uk*
w **exploreyork.org.uk/archives/**

The Our Collections page leads to dedicated guides for family and local historians.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

East Yorkshire FHS

w **eyfhs.org.uk**

You can find out all about current publications and projects, and there's useful information about the Carnegie Heritage Centre (**carnegiehull.co.uk**), a community centre for family and local history.

Yorkshire Archaeological & Historical Society

w **yas.org.uk**

This society has been going since 1863 and its collections are held at the University of Leeds Brotherton Library (**library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1500/special-collections**).

Yorkshire Group of Family History Societies

w **yorksgroup.org.uk**

Considering just how many genealogical groups there are scattered across Yorkshire, an umbrella group such as this is very helpful.

MUSEUMS

East Riding Museums

w **eastridingmuseums.co.uk**

Here you can read about specialist collections at various East Riding museums, such as the maritime treasures preserved at Goole Museum. You can also search objects and ephemera via **museums-collections.eastriding.gov.uk/culture/museums/collections/main.php**.

Hull Maritime Museum

a **Queen Victoria Square, Hull HU1 3DX**
t 01482 300300
e *hymc@hullcc.gov.uk*
w **maritimehull.co.uk**

The museum is expected to reopen in 2026 following a multi-million pound redevelopment.

Hull Museums and Gallery

a **36 High Street, Hull HU1 1NQ**
t 01482 300300
e *museums@hcandl.co.uk*
w **hullmuseums.co.uk**

The site contains details of various heritage attractions in Hull. A new collections search tool is in the wings, but for now **museumcollections.hullcc.gov.uk** has sections on maritime history and slavery.

WEBSITES

Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk**

Ancestry's collections come from county archives in West and North Yorkshire, and include electoral registers totalling around 60 million entries.

Findmypast

w **findmypast.co.uk**

The Yorkshire Collection includes parish records and Bishop's Transcripts provided by a consortium of Yorkshire archives, including East Riding and the Borthwick Institute for Archives.

An RAF mechanic's notebook, 1943

Trevor Clark of Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre shares a remarkable tale of survival from the Second World War Interview By Rosemary Collins

During the early 19th century, a Royal Navy dockyard was established on the Cleddau Estuary in Pembrokeshire, south-west Wales. The town of Pembroke Dock grew around it, and the dockyard thrived until 1926. In 1930, the Royal Air Force established a flying-boat base at the former dockyard, which grew to become the largest in the world during the Second World War. Today the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre is dedicated to preserving the town's important history. Trevor Clark, collections manager at the centre, tells us about a remarkable document from its collections – Second World War mechanic Ronald Fisher's account of being stranded at sea.

Who Was Ronald Fisher?

Ronald Montague Fisher, known as 'Ronnie', was born in Morecambe, Lancashire, in 1923. Growing up in the 1930s, Ronnie developed a passion for cars and aeroplanes. On leaving school at 14, he started work as a trainee mechanic with Town Hall Garage in Lancaster. After learning his trade, he moved to the engineering company Armstrong Siddeley, who were building aero engines. With the outbreak of war, Ronnie was keen to 'do his bit', so joined the local Home Guard while awaiting the result of his application to join the RAF.

Ronnie was accepted as a flight mechanic, and following a shortened technical course (due to his civilian trade) as an engine mechanic. He immediately volunteered for flying duties. At this time, Short Sunderland flying boats employed two technically trained men among a crew of 12 who also manned the machine-gun positions. This was the job the RAF decided that Ronnie was ideal for. After a short air-gunnery course at RAF Pembrey in Carmarthenshire, south-west Wales, he was posted to 422 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force, flying long-range anti-submarine patrols from Northern Ireland. His youth and demeanour earned him the nickname 'Junior' among his Anglo-Canadian crew.

On 3 September 1943, 'Junior' and his crew suffered serious engine problems over the Bay of Biscay. The captain had to force-land the large aircraft on the open sea before control was lost altogether. The crew managed to board dinghies, and spent three days adrift in the sea before being rescued.

Sadly Ronnie only survived for a couple of months after his rescue. On 20 November the crew were again on patrol over the Bay of Biscay when their craft was lost. No trace of it was ever found. Ronnie and his crew are all remembered on the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede, Englefield Green, Surrey, along with all other aircrew who were lost in the Second World War who have no known grave.

At the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre, we have a large collection of letters, photographs and much correspondence both from his commanding officer and other families of the crew members he flew with, after the loss of their aircraft. We have two aviation books from the 1930s – obviously treasured by Ronnie – together with a 1939 scrapbook, filled with his drawings of aeroplanes. We have his medals too, but these were awarded over two years after his death. His younger sister, Brenda Greenfield, his last surviving sibling, donated them to us to keep his memory alive.

Ronnie continued to write updates every few hours as the crew drifted at sea

What Happened When He Was Stranded At Sea?

Ronnie wrote in his notebook on 3 September 1943, "09.15 Crew of DD861 in two dinghies adrift in the Bay of Biscay. Starboard engine 'popping and banging' then became a mass of flames and 'fell off' taking with it the starboard float. Skipper and 'Romeo' fighting to keep aircraft straight, but in spite of their efforts, she is going down fast in a series of starboard spins. No one is badly hurt when we hit the sea, but all badly shaken."

Ronnie continued to write updates every few hours as the crew drifted at sea, waiting for rescue. He recorded the nitty-gritty of their struggles to survive, noting that they ate Horlicks tablets from their ration tins and adding on 4 September at 19.00, "Hazardous feat of urinating into the sea, had to compromise by using flying boots." He also described unsuccessful attempts to attract the attention of passing British aircraft with distress flares. Over three days the crew's situation became increasingly desperate, with problems including dwindling rations, seasickness, sunburn, lack of sleep, arguments between the men, and sightings of sharks.

You can sense Ronnie's relief on 6 September. The entry at 13.00 reads,

Visit Us

Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre
a Royal Dockyard Chapel, Meyrick Owen Way, Pembroke Dock SA72 6WS
t 01646 684220
e *collections@pdht.org*
w **pdht.org/collection-2**

The centre is closed for the winter but reopens on 17 February, when its opening hours will be Monday to Friday, 10am–4pm.

Friday September 3rd. 1945

0900 hours Sunderland ("P" DD861) cruising along Percussion + Patrol Bay of Biscay

0.915 Crew of ("P" DD861) in two dinghies adrift in the Bay of Biscay (44° 30' N 13° 50' W)

Starboard outer engine began popping + within seconds became a mass of flames + subsequently fell out, tearing off the float which was left dangling. Explosion in the region of the rear fuel tank. + Electrical short on the Engineers Panel. Fuel feed cut to starboard inner. Romeo + Skipper fighting to keep aircraft straight but in spite of these combined efforts aircraft going down fast in a series of starboards dives.

No one hurt very badly when we hit the sea but everyone badly shaken. Both dinghies launched + two emergency packs saved. One dinghy leaking badly. of the twelve of us only 10 could get in one dinghy so the skipper + second pilot still in water for one hour. at last leak repaired in dinghy so six of us in each dinghy. Dinghies tied together. SOS sent by signal before we crashed doubt whether picked up or not.

"Sighted first sharks. Landfall should be sighted by Thursday, if rations will last. Growing rapidly weaker." Fortunately we find at 14.00, "Sighted Liberator 5 miles west, flying a northerly course. Liberator turned to face us and for a second I hope he [sic] seen us, but passes over us at 3000ft. We are all signalling frantically, he has turned, he has seen us at last!"

The Liberator was a long-range aircraft that was not capable of landing at sea, but an hour later another Sunderland flying boat flew overhead and dropped supplies of food and life jackets. It then made a perilous landing on choppy seas, and the men paddled furiously towards it to be rescued. Ronnie's final entry says, "17.30 Pembroke Dock here we come! HAPPY AS THE DAY IS LONG."

What Other Material Do You Hold?

Our archive has more than 6,000 artefacts covering the military and social history of the town, and a further 5,000 images, all in the process of being digitally scanned. By far the largest part of our collection is made up of documents and artefacts relating to RAF Pembroke Dock. Notable items include the remains of Short Sunderland Mk 1, which sank at its moorings in 1940.

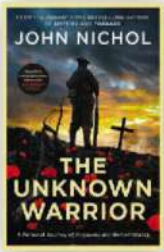
REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

MILITARY HISTORY

The Unknown Warrior
A Personal Journey Of Discovery And Remembrance

John Nichol
Simon & Schuster, 400 pages, £22



Over a million British Empire troops gave their lives during the First World War. It is impossible to imagine the heartbreaking sense of loss so many families experienced at the time and over the long years that followed. Half a million of those who never returned home have no known grave. Unable to visit the resting place of a loved one, just how did those left behind find closure?

In his latest book, *The Unknown Warrior*, John Nichol, who himself served in the Royal Air Force, begins a personal journey of remembrance at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior during a service at Westminster Abbey in 2018. Having also served in war, Nichol was no stranger to the act of remembrance and what it means. Yet, as he writes with much emotion, it was the moment he paused at the tomb, along with a veteran of the Second World War, that the poignant words carved into the tomb's marble truly resonated with him.

Focussing on the human story, the book explores the brutal reality of war, the efforts to repatriate the dead, and the national need to adopt remembrance to bring about the closure sought by so many. He vividly retraces the journey of the Unknown Warrior to his final resting place. Nichol also tells us of those who lost loved ones in more recent conflicts, such as in the Falklands and Afghanistan. The sense of loss felt just as keenly today as 100 years ago.

The Unknown Warrior is expertly researched and superbly written. It will appeal to anyone with an interest in war and remembrance, and especially those who have lost ancestors in conflict.

Mark Simner is the author of several books on British military history and writes for magazines

The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey, 1920

GETTY IMAGES

DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

PODCAST

Never Mind the Dambusters

Podcast services

In this podcast, historians and authors Jane Gulliford Lowes and James Jefferies delve into the world of RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War, exploring the strategy, policy and events behind the significant and controversial campaign. Episode themes include the role of ground crew, Bomber Command's part in D-Day and an interview with 100-year-old veteran Tom Davidson. Free.

LISTEN

Legacies of 1619

bbc.co.uk/sounds/series/m000bdxl

This series from Radio 3's *The Essay* was recorded to mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the Americas. Five writers, including David Olusoga and Caryl Phillips, tell the stories of five enslaved individuals as found in historical records, and what their stories show about slavery. Free.

WATCH

New Time Team Digs

youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLgeHX3kbVxSWqIWxgMJzwJgDxhzez83w

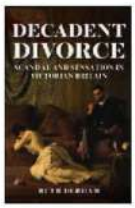
Popular archaeology and history programme *Time Team* has returned, with new episodes on YouTube. The team visit historic sites including Modbury in Devon, home of a major Civil War battle, and the famous Sutton Hoo site in Sussex, and share what they've uncovered. Free.

Decadent Divorce

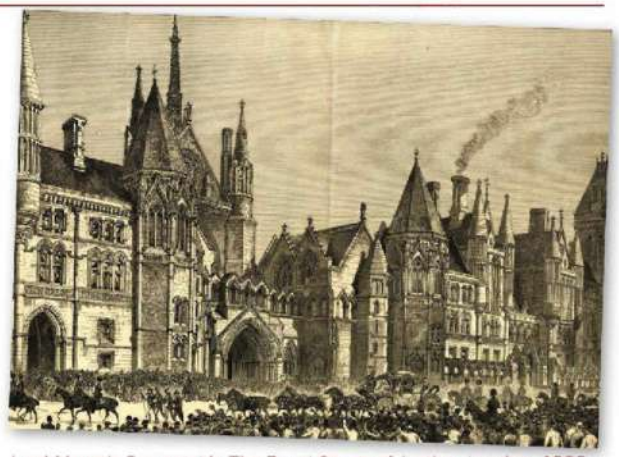
Scandal And Sensation In Victorian Britain

VICTORIAN HISTORY

Ruth Derham
Amberley, 288 pages, £22.99



Decadent Divorce provides a fascinating perspective on the workings of the Divorce Court in the final two decades of the 19th century – set in the context of the broader history of divorce from the Reformation to modern no-fault divorce.



Lord Mayor's Day outside The Royal Courts of Justice, London, 1882

Having taken over from the ecclesiastical courts in 1858, the Court's remit, as author Ruth Derham shows, included cases of nullity, separation and restitution of conjugal rights as well as divorce. Drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, she provides vivid portraits of the individuals who trooped through its doors – the unhappily married who were seeking a means of escape, the lawyers who advised them, the detectives who ferreted out evidence of adultery, the judges who interpreted concepts such as 'cruelty' and 'desertion', and the Queen's Proctor who intervened where there were suspicions of collusion or other factors that would result in a divorce being denied. High-profile scandals are discussed alongside the marital difficulties of less well-known figures.

While the cases she showcases were selected for their social-historical interest rather than their legal significance, and more use could have been made of primary legal sources, *Decadent Divorce* offers much for both specialist and general readers to enjoy.

Rebecca Probert is a professor of law at the University of Exeter and author of *Marriage Law for Genealogists*

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

Wartime Entertainment

How Britain Kept Smiling Through The Second World War

SOCIAL HISTORY

Anton and Nicola Rippon
Pen & Sword, 208 pages, £25

Wartime Entertainment: How Britain Kept Smiling Through The Second World War discusses the films, radio programmes, musicians, sport, dancing and other entertainment available to both the fighting men and those left behind during the Second World War.

The book covers public and private entertainment, both amateur and professional, and the struggles entertainers faced to keep going in wartime. Topics include radio, cinema, music and theatre. Of course, it also tells of tragedies when the Luftwaffe interrupted entertainment events. Some chapters provide a precis of stars of the time; some, like Vera Lynn, still known today and others who are long forgotten.

Whereas three quarters of the book cover less-known areas, the final chapters cover areas widely discussed in other books such as football and other sports, Christmas, rationing and returning to normal.

Throughout the book the authors include newspaper extracts, audience figures and other statistics. I would therefore recommend this book not for the layman but those who want to seriously research entertainment during the war.

Dorcas Wilson, Linlithgow
Dorcas has been researching her family history for several years

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e ***wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk***

TV & RADIO

Jonathan Wright previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

Long Lost Family: The Spanish Baby Scandal

ITVX
Available now

In early 1939, after more than two years of bitter conflict, Nationalist forces triumphed in the Spanish Civil War. The Second Spanish Republic was dissolved and the country became a dictatorship under the rule of General Francisco Franco. Only in 1975, with Franco's death, did a process of restoring democracy begin.

Over these years, dissent against the regime was brutally suppressed. Chillingly, this included a form of political-social engineering where the authorities abducted thousands of babies – estimates suggest as many as 300,000. Newborns were taken from political prisoners who gave birth in jail. Other children were orphans, including those whose parents were killed by Franco's firing squads. People deemed sympathetic to Franco's regime 'adopted' the children.

It's a shocking detail that, perhaps partly because of a kind of inertia over dismantling a lucrative baby-trafficking system, the practice of abducting children continued long after the Nationalist era had passed. Only in recent years, after long campaigns, has Spanish society even begun to come to terms with what happened. The advent of DNA technology has helped people use databases to find their biological families.

But there's still much more to be learnt, as a special *Long Lost Family* episode makes clear. It includes the heartbreaking story of Ruth Appleby, a British woman who gave birth to her first child in Spain in 1992 and was told the child had died. Several years later, following a separation and wanting to bring her daughter's remains to the UK, Ruth arranged to have her daughter's body exhumed for cremation. But the remains in what should have been her daughter's coffin were of an older child. What had happened?

Long Lost Family presenter Nicky Campbell with Irene Meca Mateo, who was trafficked as a child

Shortly after Ruth got in touch with the show, so too did Maria Elena, whose 93-year-old mother, Ana, thinks her twins, a boy and a girl born in Madrid in 1958, may also have been taken at birth.

The *Long Lost Family* team set out to discover if Ruth, Maria Elena and Ana have been caught up in the scandal. They also investigate the effect of the scandal on those who were trafficked, such as 70-year-old retired secretary Irene Meca Mateo.

Miss Austen

BBC One & BBC iPlayer
February

Why did Cassandra Austen burn so many of her beloved sister Jane's letters? It's a literary mystery that lies at the heart of *Miss Austen*, a new four-part drama based on the bestselling novel by Gill Hornby and which is being broadcast to mark the 250th anniversary of Jane's death.

The story begins in 1830 with Cassandra (Keeley Hawes) rushing to see Isabella (Rose Leslie), her long-dead fiancé's niece, who is about to lose her home following the death of her father. It's a visit in great part motivated by a desire to find a hidden cache of letters penned by Jane, letters Cassandra fears could destroy Jane's reputation.

Much of the series is told in flashback as we meet the young Cassandra (Synnøve Karlsen) and Jane (Patsy Ferran), a duo navigating infatuations, family issues and, at times, the disappointment of unfulfilled hopes – all recurring themes in Jane's novels.

A Thousand Blows

Disney+
Streaming from 21 February

Boasting *Peaky Blinders* creator Steven Knight as its lead writer, *A Thousand Blows* is a vivid and visceral drama set in the East End of the 1880s. It's here that Jamaican Hezekiah Moscow (Malachi Kirby) begins to find fame as a bare-knuckle boxer, but there are those who are unhappy about his plans to fight in the West End, especially veteran pugilist Sugar Goodson (Stephen Graham).

Both characters are based on real-life historical figures, as is Mary Carr (Erin Doherty), who was the leader of the Forty Elephants, a gang of female thieves whose name was likely a nod to where many of the women were based, Elephant & Castle in south-east London. The Elephants became infamous for their shoplifting exploits, which involved targeting upmarket department stores.

The Tattooist's Son: Journey To Auschwitz

Sky History & Now
January

The story of Gita and Lali Sokolov was immortalised in *The Tattooist Of Auschwitz*, a bestselling novel by Heather Morris and latterly a successful TV series. The Jewish-Slovakian couple met and fell in love as prisoners of the Nazis, and the book took its title from Lali's work at Auschwitz, where he tattooed new arrivals.

The couple survived and eventually settled in Australia where their only child, Gary, was born in 1961. Until very recently, Gary had never visited Auschwitz, but this one-off documentary charts his first trip to the camp where Gary learns about his parents' horrific experiences. The idea of Holocaust trauma passing through the generations is integral to the film, and Gary meets psychiatrist George Halasz and Abram Goldberg, a 100-year-old Auschwitz survivor.

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GETTY IMAGES

'The Reays Were Canadian Settlers'

David Whitmarsh has discovered ancestors who embarked on an epic adventure across North America in wagons to start a new life on the Canadian Prairies. By **Gail Dixon**

The Reay family, who journeyed to western Canada from Nebraska

My great aunt Lizzie was born on the pioneer trail at Douglas, Wyoming, USA, in 1912," says David Whitmarsh. "Her parents William and Mary Reay decided to make the 1,500-mile journey from Lost Creek, Nebraska, to Alberta, Canada. They loaded up their possessions in two covered wagons, and set off on a journey that would take 96 days."

William was descended from English settlers, who were coal miners, and worked as a farmer. Their son Charles Rudolph Reay was David's maternal grandfather, and he was born in 1896 in Pennsylvania, before the family moved to Nebraska. The Reays had 11 children, although two of them died young in 1905. So why did the couple make the radical decision to uproot their family and move to Canada?

Seismic changes took place in Western Canada between 1867 and 1914. During that time, farmers and other skilled workers were encouraged to settle on the Prairies. Millions seized the opportunity to start afresh, and there was a resultant boom in agriculture, mining and oil production.

The arrival of so many immigrants from the USA and other countries displaced the indigenous population. Persecuted groups such as black Americans, Mormons and Jewish people were also encouraged to settle, and this oceanic wave of migrants helped to develop Canadian society.

Reaching their destination would be one of the greatest challenges. Disease, extreme weather and attack from wild animals were among the dangers.

In 1962, Aunt Lizzie sent David's mum Irene Whitmarsh (née Reay) a letter, and told her more about their enthralling journey. The most perilous part came when the Reays reached the Powder River in Wyoming, which was in full flood.

"Aunt Lizzie explained that my grandfather Charles and his older sister Grace decided to hitch four horses onto the first wagon, and tie logs either side. They rode the horses across the river with the wagon floating on the logs. On reaching the other side, they towed the logs back and repeated the process with the second wagon.

"The family was scared speechless, and very concerned about Grace and Charles crossing the river with muddy water swirling over their legs. They were only teenagers at the time, and were so courageous."

Reaching their destination would be one of the greatest challenges

DAVID WHITMARSH is retired and lives in Sturminster Marshall, Dorset. He has been researching his tree for 40 years

Eventually, the Reays arrived at their destination and settled near Bashaw, Alberta, to farm. "Aunt Lizzie used to write to Mum from Canada, and told her about prairie life. The family raised livestock, and grew arable crops. In winter, they would get ready for the snow by stockpiling provisions and making sure that the hogs were safely in with plenty of food."

After the First World War broke out in 1914, Charles joined the Canadian Army and was sent to fight on the Western Front. He suffered gunshot wounds at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917, and convalesced at a military hospital near Bournemouth in Dorset. There he met ward maid Beatrice Lily Cummins, whom he married in 1918. Their daughter Irene was born a year later.

"I never got to meet Charles, who passed away in 1963. I would love to have made contact with him and asked him about his life. I wonder how he felt embarking on the pioneer trail at such a young age – excited, apprehensive or just ready for the challenge?

"However, I had the great pleasure of meeting Aunt Lizzie when she visited Britain in the 1980s, and she was a lovely, likeable lady. Her parents told her a lot about the pioneer trail, and she shared these stories as well as pictures taken at the time by land surveyors.

"I'm very proud of the Reays. To branch out from a mining background and start farming in another country must have been a challenge."

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